

Vaisakhi 2007

150 Years of Sant Khalsa



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Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji

The revivalist and reformer of the religious awakening and awareness
amongst the Sikhs in the Nineteenth Century.

The pioneer of Freedom and Non Co-operation Movement during British Raj

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Message from His Holiness

Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji

Sri Satguru Ram Singh ji
Sahai

This year the Namdhari Sikhs are celebrating the 150th anniversary of the creation of the Sant Khalsa.

During his military service, Satguru Ram Singh ji saw the condition of Sikh soldiers and their Generals who had followed the path of moral degradation from the Sikh principles. They had forgotten the Sikh code of conduct taught by Satguru Gobind Singh ji and had indulged in addiction of opium, marijuana, alcohol and other intoxicating drugs and had begun to eat meat. They had degraded from the high moral values.

Seeing the depressing condition of the Sikhs, Satguru Ram Singh ji took compassion on them and did what a Guru does according to the Sikh scriptures;

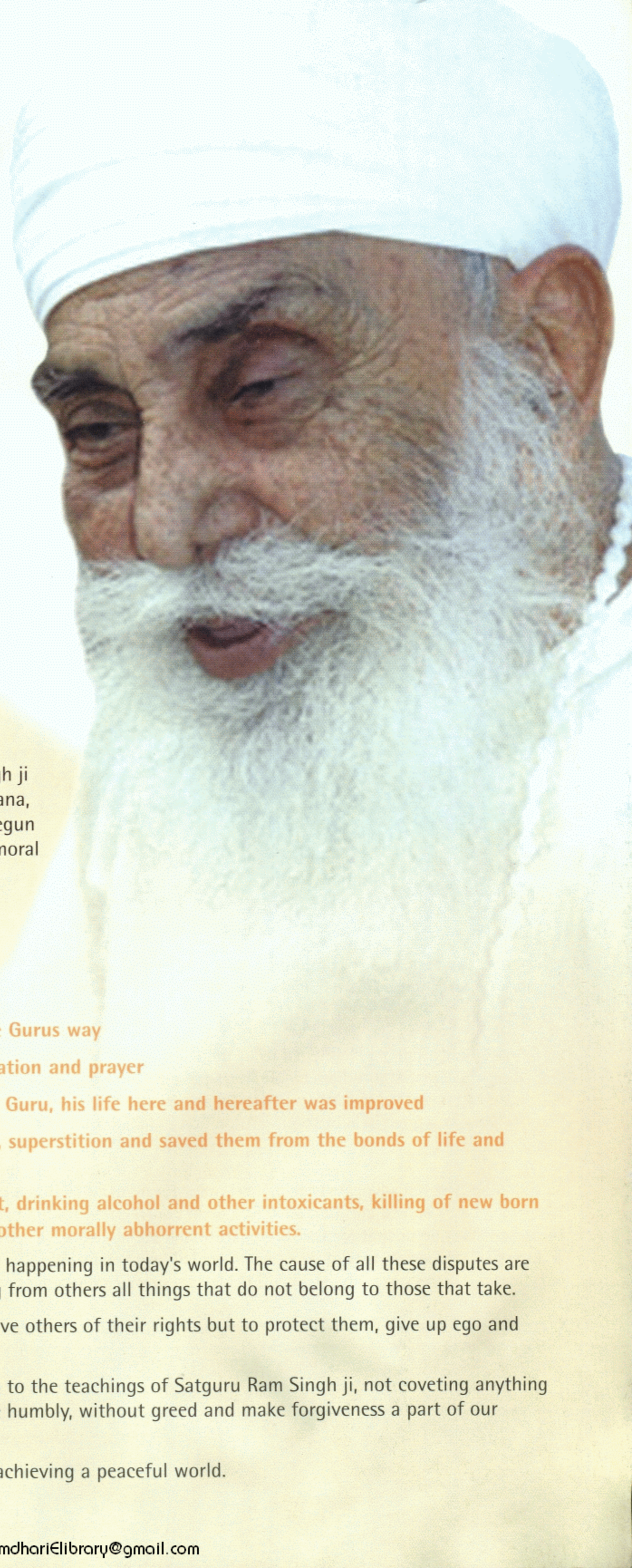
- Turned them from the un-Sikh way to the Gurus way
- Blessed them with the true path of meditation and prayer
- Whosoever obeyed the instructions of the Guru, his life here and hereafter was improved
- Satguru ji broke the shackles of social ills, superstition and saved them from the bonds of life and death
- Satguru ji stopped them from eating meat, drinking alcohol and other intoxicants, killing of new born baby girls, selling or exchange of girls or other morally abhorrent activities.

There are hundreds of wars and acts of violence happening in today's world. The cause of all these disputes are greed, ego and usurping other's rights by taking from others all things that do not belong to those that take.

Satguru Ram Singh ji told his Sikhs not to deprive others of their rights but to protect them, give up ego and lead a life of humility and selflessness.

There is a great need to lead our lives according to the teachings of Satguru Ram Singh ji, not coveting anything belonging to any other nor others rights, to live humbly, without greed and make forgiveness a part of our everyday living.

Following these principles can help us towards achieving a peaceful world.





Message from President Namdhari Sikh Sangat UK

Serve the True Guru, O Holy people; He implants the Name of the Lord, Har, Har, in our minds.
Worship the True Guru day and night; He leads us to meditate on the Lord of the Universe, the
Master of the Universe.

Behold the True Guru each and every moment.

He shows us the Divine Path of the Lord.

Let everyone fall at the feet of the True Guru;
He has dispelled the darkness of emotional attachment.
Let everyone fall at the feet of the True Guru;
He has dispelled the darkness of emotional attachment.

Sri Guru Amar Das Ji
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It is our great pleasure to celebrate the 150th year since Satguru Ram Singh Ji reminded us of the rightful path which was ordained by Sri Satguru Gobind Singh ji. Hundreds and thousands of people became true Sikhs with his spiritually powerful preaching.

Sri Satguru Ram Singh ji enlightened us of the real purpose of this human life and showed us how we can live peacefully amongst one other. Satguru Ram Singh ji was the originator and creator of the non-violent and non-corporation movement which was later adopted by Mahatma Gandhi and lead us to the independence of India. The teachings of Sri Satguru Ram Singh ji brought a great deal of social reformation in India at large. We can still benefit from those teachings by practicing them.

Satguru Ram Singh ji advocated the highest order for mankind with the strict prohibition of any killing whatsoever of Man, Woman, Child or Animal and that alone is a great contribution toward peace in the world. Sri Satguru Ram Singh ji guided us further by showing us that for the sake of truth and social justice, that the Guru is prepared always to show us the spiritually and morally appropriate way of devotion, in leading by example. We can show our gratitude to Satguru Ram Singh ji by obeying his Hukams (preachings). May God bless us so we can become good humans and true Sikhs.

On behalf of Namdhari Sikh Sangat I would like to congratulate every one on this Historic Anniversary.

Sulakhan Singh Jandu

President Namdhari Sikh Sangat UK.

Code of Conduct for the Khalsa

(As ordained and written by) The 12th Master
Ik Oankar Satgur Prasad

('One God permeating everything, everywhere and He is realised through the grace of the True Preceptor')

I Ram Singh write to you, the entire Khalsa congregation of Bhaini. "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh" - Let this (wishful greeting) be accepted by all.

This Rehatnama is written and meant for the entire Sangat (Congregation) of Bhaini.

Arise (leave your bed) when the last phase of night begins. Take a water-filled Gadwa (the pitcher-like steel container with a hinged handle) and go for defecation with only your under-clothes on. Cleanse the Gadwa twice (with soil, sand or ash): Brush your teeth with a Datun (a short tree-twig). Take a complete bath (i.e. from head to foot).

Recite Gurbani. If not already learnt by heart, learn it. All- men, women, aged or young - should do it. Jap, Jaap, Shabad Hazare of both should be learnt by heart. Rehras, Aarti Sohila must also be learnt by heart.

All should practice abstinence, chastity and contentment. Recite, all the time, the 'Word' (Naam) of the True Guru.

Regard others' daughter, sister as your own. Regarding others' rights (i.e. what one is entitled to), the Guru has already written: "Coveting others' rights is equivalent to eating pig's meat (for the Muslim) or cow's flesh (for the Hindu)."

(After having been initiated into the religious fold) whosoever doesn't recite the Guru's 'Word' (Naam), his/her face shall be tainted in both the worlds (i.e. his or her image shall get tarnished in this temporal world as well as in the Heaven).

Don't say anything bad or unsavory (to anybody). Forgive others. Tolerate and endure evil comments of everybody. Even if somebody hurts you, forgive (him or her). Your protector is the Guru Himself. Always conceal your good deeds.

Everyday, gather together, recite and sing the holy psalms and hymns. If you wish to offer sacred food to the people, then clean and purify your kitchen first. Bring unused earthen pots. Wash your feet before entering the kitchen- To conduct a *Havan* (the Sacred Vedic Fire), first, mop up the place. For the sacred fire of *Havan*, use the *Plah* or *Beri* wood. Do not blow air (from your mouth) into the sacred fire of *Havan* ; use a hand-fan (if needed). While performing *Havan*, five men should recite *Gurbani* from the spiritual textbooks - *Chaupai*, *Jap*, *Jaap*, *Chandi Charittar*, *Akaal Ustat*. The sixth man should add *Aahuti* (the pure Desi Ghee and Sammagri, the incense). The seventh man should sprinkle a little Water (cutting across the sacred fire) to contain the Holy Fire of the *Havan*.

If somebody does a bad deed, such as adultery or theft, then don't permit him/her to join the Sangat (the congregation) anywhere. If such a bad person is physically strong and obdurate, then all should pray together to the Lord that such a person should be rendered incapable of coming to and joining the congregation. My wisdom is scanty. You are wise enough to comprehend and understand everything.

All should fold their hands before God and pray: "Lord, enable us to keep up our Faith."

All should wear Kachehra (the specially designed under-garment - a symbol of chastity) (While changing your Kachehra) wear it on one leg first, then, on the other leg.

Don't hide anybody's misdeeds. Neither take (or accept) any money for your daughter or sister in marriage, nor exchanges your daughter or sister with another's.

Always keep on reciting the Guru's Word (Naam). Don't marry any girl below sixteen.

Neither takes alcoholic drinks, nor eats meat. Always have (in your mind) the fear of the Guru.

Footnotes:

- I. The original Gurmukhi script of the 'Rehatnama' runs continuously. Here, it has been paraphrased for easy understanding.
- II. Satguru Hari Singh Ji had ordered to recite Chandi Di Var and Uggardanti in addition to these.
- III. The sixth and seventh persons should meditate with Guru's Naam on his lips. (i.e. they should do Naam-Simran along with the act of adding ghee, incense and water to the sacred fire of the Havan.
- IV. All the words placed inside brackets have been given for easy understanding of the text. They are not a part of the text.

Creation of the Khalsa



"Creation of the Khalsa"

Harjinder Singh Kanwal

There has been quite a controversy on how the "Khalsa" (the pure) was created by Guru Gobind Singh ji in 1699 AD.

The incident, in many different ways, has been narrated by different authors who have either copied their predecessors or given an account of the "Vaisakhi Khalsa Creation" in a manner which suited their own logic. So far none of the accounts have a definite ring of truth in them.

There are mainly three versions of the 'Creation of Khalsa' that can become a subject of a major debate amongst the Sikh scholars.

The first version is that Guru Gobind Singh ji held a 'darbar' (congregation) at 'Kesgarh Sahib' at Anandpur and amidst the 'Sangat' (disciples) Guru Gobind Singh ji drew his sword and demanded 'heads' of the Sikhs present in the audience. One by one the Five 'Pyaras' (loved ones) came on the stage and offered their heads to the Guru Gobind Singh ji, who took them inside a tent. When he came back, he was wielding a blood-dripping sword with which he had beheaded a goat previously tied inside the tent. Thus it is understandable that instead of the 'Pyaras', five goats were slaughtered. Guru Gobind Singh ji prepared nectar and baptized them and presented them to the 'Sangat' with their new changed names as Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Himmat Singh, Mohkam Singh, and Sahib Singh.

The second version is similar to the above with the exception that Guru Gobind Singh ji took each 'Pyara' into the tent and came out of the tent brandishing a bloodstained sword. What happened in the tent is a mystery. The killing of goats is not an issue here.

The third version is very interesting and is a record of accounts that are supposedly eye witnessed by a certain "Abu-ul-Turani", who was under the employment of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Emperor had instructed him to keep a watchful eye on Guru Gobind Singh ji and act as the Emperor's informer so as to keep the Emperor informed of all the activities and movements of the Guru Gobind Singh ji.

The following is the version which Abu-ul-Turani has narrated in his book or memoirs presumed to be held in the archives of the Aligarh University.

"The day Guru Gobind Singh ji prepared the nectar at 'Anandpur' the congregation was estimated to around thirty five to forty thousand Sikhs who had come from far and wide. I had seen the grandeur of the 'Mughal Darbars' but this 'Guru's Darbar' had a charm of its own - simply majestic and beyond comparison.

Guru Gobind Singh ji came on the stage and after drawing his sword demanded a human 'head' from the 'Sangat' present. This awesome call from the Guru Gobind Singh ji sent a shiver to spines of the Sikhs present in the congregation. Amidst all this a brave person emerged from the crowd and with his clasped hands humbly presented

himself to Guru Gobind Singh ji. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, with one stroke of his sword, beheaded the Sikh in front of all the stunned 'sangat', and again asked for another 'head'. Another person who came on the stage was similarly beheaded. The Guru Gobind Singh ji made the eerie call again and simultaneously three devout Sikhs came on the stage and met the same fate under their merciless sword.

The stage was a ghastly sight with the torsos and heads of the five drenched in pools of blood. All the trace of blood diminished after the Guru Gobind Singh ji cleaned it with water. Guru Gobind Singh ji then methodically joined each head on a different body and thereafter covered them with white sheets.

He then ordered a stone urn and on top of it he put an iron pot in which he added some water. He put his sword in it and started moving it, while chanting some words. He took some time and during this period some woman from the Guru Gobind Singh ji household came and put something in the pot. The nectar (Abe-Hayat) was now ready.

The Guru then removed the white sheet from one body and poured the nectar into the man's mouth, on the hair and on the body. While he was performing this ritual he kept on pronouncing "*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*" (*The Khalsa belongs to the Almighty to the Almighty is the victory*). To the amazement of the 'sangat', the person sat up and loudly chanted "*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*". The whole 'sangat' was aghast and taken aback by this miracle. Guru Gobind Singh ji did the same to the rest of the four bodies and they also rose up with shouts of "*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*".

The Guru Gobind Singh Ji then took these five Sikhs into a tent and after some time they emerged wearing new white clothes. The Guru Gobind Singh ji then kneeled down in front of them and asked them to give him the life-giving nectar. Obliging they obeyed and baptized the Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

The Guru named them Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Himmat Singh, Mohkam Singh and Sahib Singh and consequently changed his name from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh.

What happened in front of my eyes completely entranced me, and my heart longed to be in the Guru Gobind Singh ji's eternal feet. With a lump in my throat, I approached the Guru Gobind Singh ji and begged him to baptize me and take me in his fold. The Guru Gobind Singh ji smiled and baptized me and named me 'Ajmer Singh'. Thus with the Guru Gobind Singh ji's blessing I attained absolute bliss.

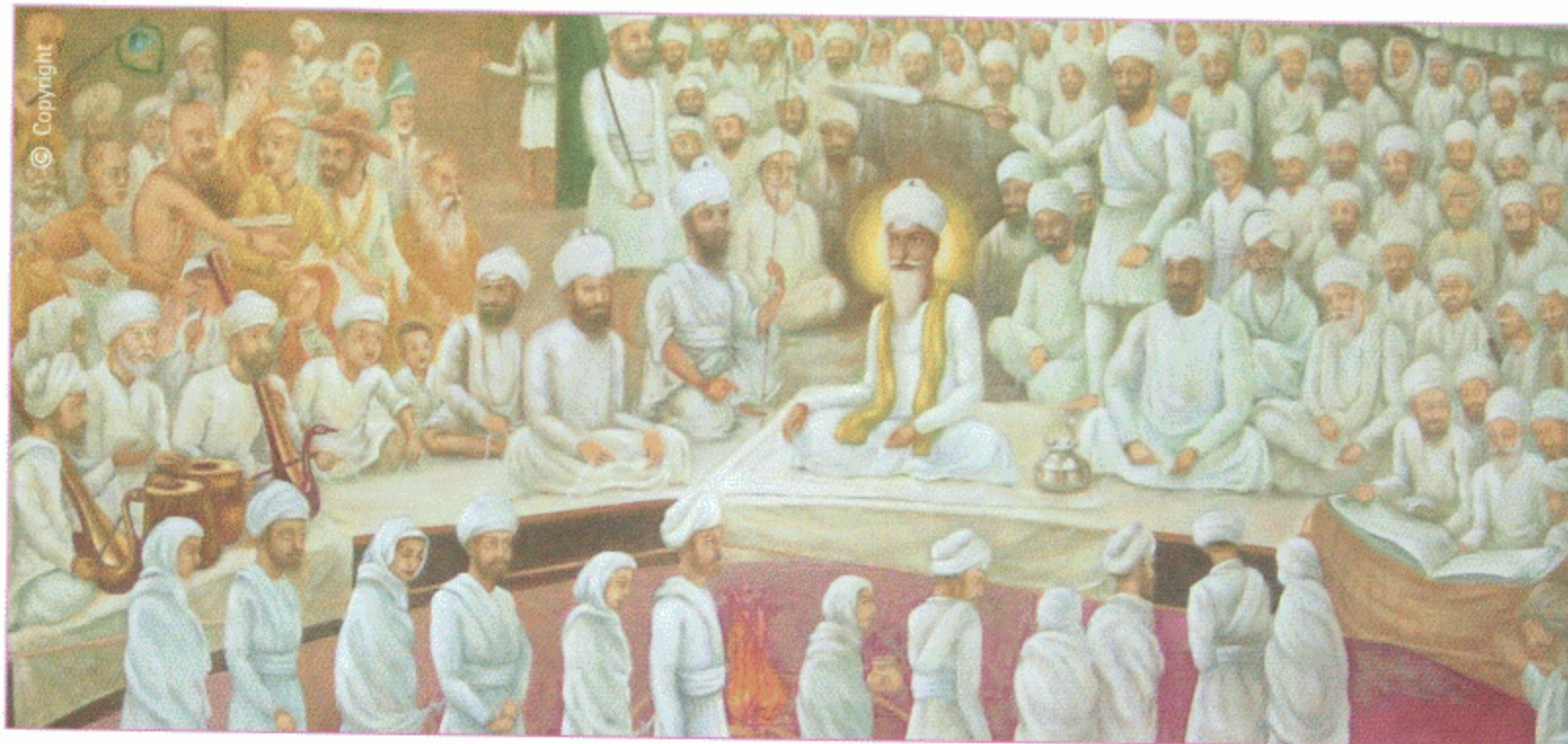
This was the last report I sent to Aurangzeb in which I mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh ji was not an ordinary person but was 'Allah' Himself. Furthermore I warned the Emperor that his enmity towards the Guru Gobind Singh ji would lead to the downfall and destruction of the Mughal Empire."

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Darbar of Sri
Satguru Ram
Singh Ji



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Anand Karaj
Ceremony in the
presence of Sri
Satguru Ram
Singh Ji



Satguru Ram
Singh Ji with
Subas and Sangat

Women being
baptised by
administering
Amrit to them on
1st June 1863 at
village Siar



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Reviver of Sikhism: Satguru Ram Singh

Swaran Singh Sanehi.

M.A. (English and History)

The creation of the Khalsa, by Guru Gobind Singh, about three centuries ago, was indubitably a unique and remarkable event of the history which did affect the socio-religious life and history not only of the people of the Punjab but was also destined to enormously influence the political situations in the neighboring lands for centuries to come. It "might prove very formidable to its neighbours," assessed Col. Poliers, "and overwhelm them in the end."¹ It was a rare kind of revolution ever devised and designed by any religious leader in such a precarious situation as Guru Gobind Singh had to pass through during early years of his pontificate.

Guru Nanak, by virtue of his unique technique of preaching, had founded the Sikh religion by initiating the people by traditional Indian mode of initiation called the Charanpahul.² In this mode a small quantity of the water in which Guru's feet had already been washed, was given to a neophyte to drink. As a matter of fact, Guru Gobind Singh followed the suit. "The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak..."³

The successors of Guru Nanak had left no stone unturned in organizing and developing the faith by addition, step by step, of some new features as the situation demanded during the pontificate of each of them. The third Guru Amardas, for instance, devised a new way of preaching known as Manji system, termed by Narang as 'a substitute for a diocesan gaddi',⁴ that worked wonders in maintaining Guru's links with his followers, when their numbers swelled and geographical expansion of the diocese required additional manpower to serve the purpose of establishing a pragmatic and better rapport with the Sikhs living in distant places. Manji is the Punjabi word used for comparatively small-sized cot which symbolized the centre under the charge of an agent appointed by the Guru for the specific purpose of disseminating both the Sikh ideology and Guru's message. This Guru is credited to have established twenty two centres or Manjis. "It is evident," observes G.C.Narang, "that this measure of the third Guru must have gone a long way in strengthening the foundations of the Church and in carrying on the propaganda in all parts of the country."⁵

By the time of tenth Guru Gobind Singh, the situation had undergone a drastic change which warranted radical changes in the form and spirit of the organization but such a change was destined to be made by the tenth Nanak. "But the difficulty is

that if each generation were allowed to change the religion handed down to it by the past, there would be left no certainty of truth, no continuity of tradition, no inspiration from example."⁶

He thought of convening the assembly of the Sikhs to introduce the changes. Surprisingly, his choice for this too fell upon the Vaisakhi day in 1756 Bk.⁷ That date perhaps had been predetermined by the Guru as the first day of the second month of Bikarmi calander had been considered an auspicious occasion and was being celebrated by the Indians as a socio-religious fair since times immemorial. In the Sikhs religion the third Guru is credited for the choice of Vaisakhi day who had sanctioned it as annual religious discourse day.⁸ The idea of convergence of the Sikh multitude on that day at Anandpur seemed to have weighed in his mind. Bawa Sarup Dass Bhalla recounts how gleefully the followers thronged to Anandpur from far and wide.⁹ If the approximate figure of 80,000 participants, given by some Sikh scholars is correct, then it undoubtedly was an assembly beyond the scope of those times when there was no modern means of conveyance.¹⁰

The Guru devised a new way to test the fidelity of the Sikhs before embarking upon new venture. He put to test the entire assembly conglomerated on the bank of the river Sutlej on the fixed day when he appeared with a scintillating sword in his hand and repeatedly asked in stentorian voice if there was anyone who could spare his head for the Guru.

An eerie like silence fell upon the confounded gathering which was frightened at Guru's posture. The obscurantists started whispering among themselves that the Guru had lost his reason. It was on the third call given by the Master that Daya Ram of Lahore vivaciously offered his head. Then the same demand was put by the Guru four times and each time one person would follow the suit of his predecessor responding to the third call as had been in previous case.¹¹

The majority of the historians believe that each time the Sikh was taken into a tent already pitched close to the dais where after the sound of something falling down was heard by the people and the blood was seen flowing out of the tent, implying thus that the Guru had slaughtered male goats surreptitiously tethered there¹² while the other section asserts that the heads of the selected five persons were amputated who were revived by the Guru afterwards.¹³

One historian concludes that it was a test given by the Guru to his followers and as no examiner discloses his test paper in advance, so it is not

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REVIVER OF SIKHISM

known as to what happened to the five in the tent.¹⁴ This has made the immediate fate of the five shrouded in the mystery but it is evident that only five -Daya Ram, Dharam Chand, Mohkam Dass, Sahib Chand, and Himat had passed the test out of the gargantuan gathering and, consequently were rechristened by appending an appellation of Singh (Lion) to the individual's original name. They were termed as the 'beloved ones' who are venerated in the Sikh history as the most pious persons.

The above mentioned horrible scene of the assembly was unexpected. The Guru was determined to organize his followers anew and in a new way. The proposed new organization of the Sikhs was meant to serve the nation in altogether a new manner. He therefore gave it birth in a unique and queer way from the edge of the sword, ever known in the history of religions.

The tenth Nanak no doubt desired, in accordance with the changed situation and his objective of turning his followers into arms - wielding brave fighters, his campaign pertinently was commenced from the initiating rite itself.

The life of Guru Gobind Singh proved to be a turning point in the history of the Sikhs not merely because he transformed the docile and servile Sikhs into a martial race but primarily because of the introduction of ideological and behavioral changes into the faith of his predecessors which gave the Sikhs a stringent religious discipline based on a specific code of religious conduct hitherto unknown in the fraternity thus infusing a new spirit in them and presenting them in a different form and shape endeavouring to take the religion to unexpected heights so that it may survive all types of onslaughts for centuries to come. Basically he was a religious leader, succeeded to a religious throne of Guru Nanak who was, according to his own confession, assigned the duty by the Almighty of spreading and protecting the religion. In the light of this objective, martialism was just a means to achieve the real end.¹⁵ The changes which he had aimed at too were not spontaneous but it was a gradual process which had been simmering in his mind since quite some time.¹⁶

He took, according to Bhangoo, the charanpahul to be the sole reason behind the servility in the Sikhs¹⁷ despite the fact that he himself had been practising the same mode of initiation during the earlier period of his pontificate.¹⁸ "The most significant thing to notice here is the substitution of the double edged dagger in place of Guru's toe and the meaning is quite clear. The old ideal of humility and surrender was being changed with a new one of self-assertion and self-reliance."¹⁹

The selection of the five was followed by the administration of the Amrit (nectar) to baptise them which was prepared by reading sacred hymns on pure water brought from the river Sutlej. Most of the accounts differ on the question of the person who prepared the Amrit, the mode of its preparation, reading of the sacred hymns on the occasion to sanctify the water, the steel-weapon used in the

process, manner of administration of the Amrit and first recipient of this unique immortalizing beverage.²⁰ We defer this discussion for some other opportunity due to the paucity of time and space here.

The Guru thereafter delivered a hanangue to these five beloved followers equally meant for the audience and the posterity. It included Do's and Dont's of his faith that can be termed in modern usage as the 'code of conduct' for the Sikhs. Some practices hitherto a part of the Indian socio-religious life as well as social taboos were rejected. Smoking, stealing, lying, drinking, gambling and cohabiting with any woman outside the wedlock were among the forbidden items. The special care of the hair was exceptionally emphasised. It is believed that by stressing the care of the hair he 'combined in himself the saintliness of the old Rishis with the sternness and strength of a knight. Therefore, like his predecessors, he kept his hair long, which all the world over has always been associated with saintliness.'²¹ These postulates also included complete social boycott of some kinds of persons too, as for instance, those who indulged in female infanticide, or smoking etc. Dissociation of the Masands and abolition of any mediator for remitting any contribution to the Guru were among the new directions.

In those days the surviving relatives of the deceased person used to shave their heads as a condolatory rites. Some other would tonsure their children at various shrines. Guru Gobind Singh now attached such a sanctity to the human hair that the Sikhs were ordained not only to take care of their own hair but also directed to sever all kinds of relationship with persons who used to shave their heads.²² Two other injunctions of wearing the sword, and an underwear of a particular shape and cut were also added.²³ The discipline of five Ks purportedly pronounced by the Guru at this ceremony does not figure in any contemporary or near contemporary account pertaining to the creation of the Khalsa.²⁴

Guru Gobind Singh having altered the mode and substance of initiation had transformed the nature and appearance of the Sikhs. He introduced the uniformity and a new discipline in them because he had realized that the discipline "keeps up the spirit of individual against relaxation in times of trial and maintains their loyalty to the cause even in moments of ebb."²⁵ It was by virtue of the newly introduced discipline that the Sikhs made enviable history during the eighteenth century when they were destined to struggle hard for their survival facing the liquidation campaigns launched by ruthless functionaries of the despotic rulers offering a reward of twenty-five rupees for the severed head of the Sikh and rupees one hundred for the alive Sikh on one hand,²⁶ and on the other, forcing Sikh women to manually grind the incredible quantities of the grain with the slain bodies of their children in their laps.²⁷

Such a superb and unsurpassed patience, emulative endurance and unprecedented prowess exhibited by the Sikh men and women during the critical period which

forms a bloody chapter of the history owed its origin to the seeds sown by Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur on the Vaisakhi day in 1756 Bk or 1699A.D. It was a different kind of revolution that had emboldened the coward sparrows to tear the dreaded hawks to pieces. Paying glowing tributes to Guru Gobind Singh and his creation, eminent historian, N.K. Sinha remarks, "A nation was up in arms against its enemies and it is the collective efforts of the masses rather than individual achievements that ultimately made the revolution a success. Naturally enough, the story of these years of revolution 'is a story of great things and small, but when all is said, the great predominate, for no blunder could efface the readiness for self-sacrifice displayed by the whole people.'" ²⁸

The Sikhs belonging to the higher strata of society had not forsaken the religious code or renounced the tenets and beliefs in eighteenth century. They seemed to have maintained their religious discipline more vigorously upto the adventurous period of their history. "The life of a Sikh Sirdar, in the days of Jassa Singh was very simple. At day break he would rise, perform his ablutions, and dress, repeating the morning prayer or "Sukhmani". He then took his morning meal, which consisted in Jassa Singh's case, of two pounds of flour and half a pound of sugar candy, "Griffin observes that the Sirdar would say his evening prayers too and would offer an Ardas before going to bed." ²⁹

Baba Ala Singh, the founder of Patiala state, knew the importance the Guru had attached to the preservation of the human hair. During the sixth invasion of Ahmedshah Abdali, he was made captive by the former who was determined to divest the latter of his hair. "The Afghan Emperor ordered that Ala Singh's long hair should be cut. Ala Singh, who like all devout Sikhs, considered Keshas as the gift of the tenth Guru, offered to pay the cost. Abdali agreed to the suggestion of Ala Singh and allowed him to retain his hair at the cost of one lakh and twenty thousand rupees." ³⁰

Unfortunately, such a glorious period was followed by the gradual decline of the Khalsa thrusting a vast majority to the abysmal depth that presented very dismal picture in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Sikhism nurtured and irrigated by the blood of the entire family of Guru Gobind Singh was abandoned by the Sikhs to become a dead wood. Sir Denzil Ibbetson, the Census commissioner, had ventured to say "Sikhism is on the decline." ³¹ Similar was the observation made by Trumpp who regarded it as a 'waning religion.' ³² "Every shadow of that concord which once formed the strength of the Sikh nation, seemed to be extinguished," Malcolm had observed much before the advent of a pious liberating soul on the stage. ³³ Corroborating the same, Major Leech reported the gravity of the situation even in 1844. "The Sikh religion which had long since reached its zenith is now visibly on the decline and the Sikhs themselves say that the 'Manmatya' or free thinking Sikhs who follow their own whims and fancies instead of principles of Gooroos are daily on the increase." ³⁴

It is believed that the Sikhs had struggled hard for their religion upto the time of Banda Bahadur ³⁵ and had maintained their identity and tenets upto the Sikh rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. ³⁶ All the Sikh axiology was forgotten with the demise of the Sikh monarch but a diligent study of his life and times would, on the contrary, reveal the fact that the Sikhism had started declining during the Sikh rule itself and Maharaja's own frequent indulgences in some of the taboos might have encouraged the masses to much laxity.

"The assumption of irresponsible power by Runjeet Singh destroyed, in some degree, the potency of the Khalsa," was lamented by Steinbach who had been one of the foreigner employee of the Sikh monarch. He is accused of abolishing the tradition of Gurmata. 'This continued till 1809, when the last political Gurmata was held. After this, Maharaja Ranjit Singh abolished the custom of holding a gurmatta for political purposes, and began to take action on the advice of non-Sikh as well as Sikh counselors.' ³⁸ Kapur Singh has taken much pains to go into details of the anti-Sikh practices adopted by this Sikh monarch. ³⁹ As the king so are his subjects. "Changes for the worst have always synchronized with the lack of insistence on the baptismal vows. This was in the days of the Sikh rule, when luxury and power tempted our people to consider the vows too hard for them. They lost their identity as Sikhs and became as superstitious about God and his worship as they had been before the time of the Gurus." ⁴⁰ Considering him as a role model, the contemporary historians, while describing the apostasy amongst the Sikhs, have pertinently raised their accusing fingers more towards this monarch than towards the masses.

The drinking, for instance, had been condemned and prohibited in Sikh scriptures including the Holy Granth ⁴¹ but Maharaja Ranjit Singh was addicted to drinking and he did not drink an ordinary liquor. Sir Lapel Griffin discloses that he "has a fierce compound distilled from corn brandy mixed with the juice of meat, opium, musk and various herbs. Of this, he drank large quantities in the evening and at night." ⁴² Steinbach said that he could 'resist' potations, pottle deep' of a fiery spirit, a very small dose of which would overthrow an Englishman. 'The Maharaja boasted for consuming more liquor even than the Englishmen. He'...in his later days jocosely declared that there was only one British officer who could approach him in the copiousness of his libations to Bacchus." ⁴³ Jaffar Begh, a contemporary poet, believes the liquor to be a major factor leading to the protracted death of the Maharaja. ⁴⁴ Griffin alludes to the death of prominent Sikhs, including Raja Amar Singh of Patiala, Sardul Singh and Lal Singh due to intemperance. "Almost every great family had the same record." ⁴⁵

John Malcolm reports about the commonality too. The Sikhs had started taking liquor professing that it had been sanctioned in the scriptures. ⁴⁶ "It is rare to see a Singh soldier after sun set, quite sober". He cites the example of Sardar Fateh Singh Ahluwalia who

was first feeling shy to drink in the presence of the former but afterwards 'did take it.'⁴⁷

While relating his own experience, Mecaulliffe disclosed that it had been only after listening his lecture at Simla revealing that 'it is known to every Sikh that tobacco is forbidden by his religion, but it is not generally known that wine is equally forbidden,' that the Patiala Singh Sabha had passed a resolution in favour of total abstinence.⁴⁸

Similar was the situation regarding the tobacco" which is one of the most important of the rules drawn up by Gobind Singh for the guidance of his followers."⁴⁹ "the Guru issued the imperative injunction: Thou shalt not smoke."⁵⁰ The Sikhs are supposed to refrain even from touching the leaves of this herb. A French traveller Jacquemont tells us that Murray did never smoke in the presence of a Sikh and the Sikhs were appreciative of his habit.⁵¹ "The Sikhs have a horror of tobacco.

A Mussulman would never smoke in the Punjab in front of a respectable Sikh. This woman (Moran?) who had such influence over the rajah, smoked in his presence in his howdah and he even assisted her to light her hookah, probably the most outrageous exhibition he has made in Lahore."⁵²

Several references scattered in the various Sikh scriptures point out that adultery, debauchery and fornication etc had no place in Sikh religion. Guru Gobind Singh too had warned his followers against committing adultery even during the dream.⁵³

The Sikhs accordingly maintained such a high morality even during the most critical period that even their invidious and inveterate enemies, such as Qazi Noor Mohammad, could not help praising this aspect of their life.⁵⁴ Similarly, the Mohammedan author of Fatuhat Nama-i- Samadi had observed that "If a woman falls into their (the Khalsa) hands, they look upon her as their mother."⁵⁵ But now they had fallen victim to licentiousness of worse type.

"Their moral character with regard to women, and indeed in most other points may, from the freedom of their habits, generally be considered as much more lax than that of their ancestors, who lived under the restraint of severe restrictions ..." ⁵⁶ The Maharaja is most conspicuous for moral violations too. "Ranjit's excesses are shameless. The fact that this grey-beard has had and has a number of catamites is nothing shocking in this country," laments Jacquement, "The inhabitants of Lahore saw him a hundred times in those days sitting with her (Moran) on an elephant, and toying with her as though in the zenana, and that in broad day light, surrounded by a large escort and talking and laughing with them all the time."⁵⁷ Going a step farther, Prinsep vituperates him for being 'licentious in the extreme disregardful of all ties of blood' too.⁵⁸ Sodomy among well to do families had become a fashion in those days.⁵⁹

Henry Lawrence, has shed some more light on this

aspect of life in the Punjab. "The Sikh princes, nobles and Sirdars spent their time in the brothel of the city leaving their wives to console themselves with the servants or chance lovers."⁶⁰ Immorality to such an extent resulted in the extinction of many a noble families due to the venereal diseases contracted through such extramarital relationship and unnatural sexual intercourse prevalent in the society.⁶¹

The Sikhs had become such decides that following the cold blooded murder of Bhai Bir Singh Naurangabadi while at prayers, they had boastfully declared that they would not allow any hermit or saint to survive upon the earth.⁶² This murder was such a heinous crime which even the westerners would have feared to commit.⁶³

Reverence for the human hair too had become a thing of the past. The removal of the hair was regarded such an heinous and sacrilegious crime that the person committing this crime was declared as an apostate while that indulging in other prohibited practices was declared just 'tankhahya' who deserved comparatively minor punishment.'⁶⁴ Griffin mentions Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia as having 'over hanging eyebrows'⁶⁵ That kind of care had been discarded as the Sikhs had started resorting to various methods of removal of the hair from the different parts of the body.⁶⁶ They were originally instructed to support a flowing beard but violation of this injunction too owed its origin to the family of Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Maharaja Sher Singh had been the first to introduce the tying of the beard⁶⁷ which ultimately paves the way to trimming and cutting or shaving it.

Reading of the scripture and the scriptural hymns, which formed the part of the mandatory morning and evening prayers of the ancestors had utterly been abandoned with the result that the carelessly shelved volumes of the Holy Granth either gathered dust or had fallen victims to the mice.⁶⁸ Majority of the Sikhs no longer offered ambrosial or evening prayers themselves but mocked at others who obeyed the injunctions in this regard.⁶⁹

The baptism by the amrit was regarded as the basis of the Sikh religion.⁷⁰ The strength of the Sikh religion depended upon the newly initiated persons as the child born in the Sikh family does not become naturally a Sikh according to the code of conduct unless and until one is baptized after subscribing to the Sikh religious code. The Sikhs of the period under discussion had forsaken this custom also. "From the time of Gobind (Singh) onwards, and especially during the period of Ranjit Singh's reign spiritual fervor, national pride and anti-Islamic fanaticism operated powerfully to swell the number of those who embraced the Sikh faith. With the annexation of the Punjab, Sikhism lost much of its old popularity and its members, uncertain of the attitude of their new masters, refrained from bringing their sons for baptism," was observed by Patrie.⁷¹

The forlorn picture has its details in the Administration report for the year 1851-52 which pointed out ,

"...These men joined in thousands, and they now desert in equal numbers. They rejoin the ranks of Hinduism whence they originally came, and they bring up their children as Hindus. The sacred tank at Umritsar is less thronged than formerly and the attendance at the annual festivals is diminishing yearly., the initiating ceremony for adult persons is now rarely performed," was the conclusion of the report.⁷²

Any religion much flourishes under political patronage. Macauliffe points out that Emperor Akbar's historian, Abul Fazl, very clearly saw the advantage of State support to a religion. 'Men of deep sight are of opinion that even spiritual progress among a people would be impossible, unless emanating from the king, in whom the light of God dwells.'⁷³ If examined from this point of view, the Sikh rule proved to be a boon to the religion of the monarch. This assertion may be substantiated with the hypothesis that there had been about ten million Sikhs during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.⁷⁴ Even the Brahmans from the United Province had embraced the creed of the monarch which suitably benefited them in political and administrative ascendancy. Similar observation was made by Sir Lapel Griffin who compared and contrasted the contemporary situation with the previous one. "During the days of Ranjit Singh, when spiritual fervour and national pride worked in common, the numbers who joined the dominant faith were proportionately great. At the time of the first British census of 1855 the outside influences were depressing. The Khalsa had fallen to rise no more...."⁷⁵ Their number was horribly declined.

Prasad, for instance, is regarded as a sacred thing in Indian religious life and is prepared with careful sanctity.⁷⁶ In Sikh religion too it usually is offered to the Gurus or the Almighty before or after embarking on any important mission to seek the blessings or for thanksgiving on success. When the Khalsa armies were to march for the Anglo-Sikh wars in December 1845, the Sikh soldiers asked a sweetmaker to prepare the Prasad who used the obnoxious water polluted with the smoking pipe which is condemned as a sacrilege.⁷⁷ It did not auger well and the Sikh armies were defeated.

The Masand system had long been abolished by Guru Gobind Singh but the Masands did still exist in one form or the other. The clergy who was supposed to guide the ignoramus their way to spiritual heights, was Observed by Trumpp to be 'marvellously ignorant of the principles of their own religion.'⁷⁸ Narrating his personal experience in later period, Macauliffe admitted with regret "that the practice of the majority of the Sikhs is quite different from the precepts of their religion. A knowledge of the language in which their sacred books are written is not now possessed by more than perhaps twenty-five men in the world, and perhaps even the number twenty-five is an exaggeration."⁷⁹ The custodians of the shrines had become more sanctimonious claiming divine rights to the Sikh shrines which were regarded as their personal

fiefdoms and more often abused by ill-spending the public offerings to satiate their licentious desires.⁸⁰

The relationship between the Sikhism and the Sikhs had degraded to that of the cow and the butcher. The Sikhs during post-Ranjit Singh period had by their acts of omission and commission earned such an infamy that the Sikhism shuddered at the sight of the Sikhs similarly as the cow trembles on seeing a butcher.⁸¹ 'Even the British had inherited a Punjab in which the term 'Sikh' carried no precise or agreed meaning. It covered a varied range of differing indentified, no one of them accepted as standard or orthodox.'⁸²

"We are told by the writers of 1855 census that the old Sikhs were dying out and newly converted Sikhs were few and that many children of Sikhs were now brought up as Hindus. Now that Sikhism was politically defunct, many Sikhs re-converted to Hinduism in this way the numerical paucity of the Sikhs in 1855 was explained."⁸³ In a nutshell, "The virtues which the Sikhs link to their heavy catalogue of vices are few in number."⁸⁴

In the prevailing situation it was thought by the intellectuals as an impossible task to introduce any reform or bring the misguided masses to the right path. "It is impossible in India to make voluntary conversion of any number perceptible in so vast a population without miraculous gifts, rarely claimed by, but always imputed to a new teacher or saint. Devotion and asceticism impress because they are found to connote influence with heaven rather than as ethical examples,"⁸⁵

At such a juncture, a pious soul, in form of Satguru Ram Singh, appeared to rescue the Sikhism. He enjoyed his childhood at Rayan near Bhaini in Ludhiana district of Punjab and passed his adolescence while serving as a soldier in the Naonihal Regiment of the Khalsa army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had seen for himself as to what a low level the Sikhs, having discarded all the injunctions of the Gurus and the scriptures, had stooped.

Moved by aforesaid appalling situation Satguru Ram Singh threw his Muscat in the waters at Harike- a confluencing point of three rivers-on the eve of the first Anglo-Sikh war in 1845, and returned to his home where he concentrated on the meditations on the holy name of the Almighty for about one year.⁸⁶ Then he embarked upon his mission of resuscitating and reforming the Sikh religion through preaching campaigns. He too chose the Vaisakhi day in 1914 Bikarmi calendar⁸⁷ corresponding to 11th April 1857 A.D.⁸⁸ for the inaugural function at Bhaini.

"It is curious that the greatest religious reforms have been effected by the laity."⁸⁹ Socrates was a laity. Christ was by trade a carpenter and so was Satguru Ram Singh who also hailed from a similar family and had been a laity as well. He embarked upon the reformation of the Sikh religion.

"The men we admire most, including those we look upon as peculiarly good, are invariably men of notable

self-assertion. Thus Martin Luther was a man of most intense self-feeling, resentful of opposition, dogmatic, with "an absolute confidence in the infallibility, practically speaking, of his own judgement." This is a trait belonging to nearly all great leaders, and a main cause of their success. That which distinguish Luther from the vulgarly ambitious and aggressive people we know, is not the quality of his self feeling, but the fact that it was identified in his imagination and endeavours with sentiments and purposes that we look upon as noble, progressive, or right. No one could be more ambitious than he was, or more determined to secure the social aggrandizement of his self, but in his case the self for which he was ambitious and resentful consisted largely of certain conviction regarding justification by faith, the sacrilege of the sale of indulgences, and, more generally, of an enfranchising spirit and mode of thought fit to awaken and lead the aspiration of the time. ⁹⁰ "...the great men of history were real men, not shams, their characters were genuinely representative of the deeper needs and tendencies of human nature, so that in following them men were truly expressing to our own tendency expressing themselves." ⁹¹

Satguru Ram Singh wanted to initiate five persons as a token of commencement of the campaigns but from amongst such a degraded society he could not find five Sikhs complete in every respect fully maintaining the code and ethics. They were only two and a half: Lehna Singh Gharjakh and Jamiat Singh Kahna were two complete Sikhs while Jamiat Singh of Gill ⁹² was a half because he used to charge the interest on the loans advanced to the needy which is a condemned item in Indian religio-social life. ⁹³

Satguru Ram Singh collected five persons including Kahn Singh Nihang, Labh Singh Ragi, Atma Singh, Naina Singh and sudh Singh for initiating ceremony. ⁹⁴ They were asked to take a complete bath with pure water. Then he took the water in an iron pot and started stirring it with double-edged dagger called Khanda ⁹⁵ concomitantly reading of sacred hymns namely Jap, Jaap, Swayas, Chaupai, and Anand. Satguru Ram Singh was the first to use the weapon Khanda and select the exact five sacred hymns to be read on the occasion now. ⁹⁶ In this way he prepared the Amrit (Nectar) which was administered to the chosen five Sikhs first.

Thus the Sikhism was revived by him but the revival was not complete yet. Code of religious conduct which remains to be part and parcel of the religion was yet to be promulgated but sorrowfully it was not fully known in Punjab ⁹⁷ though was in vogue at Nanded in Maharashtra where the tenth Guru had temporarily stayed. "As true Gobindi Sikhs they (the Dekhani Sikhs-living in Nanded) are careful observers of the five Kakkas and conform strictly to the ordinances of the tenth Guru...(He was) distinguishable from his Punjabi confrere by his dress, which is still much the same as it was in the time of Gobind Singh," Bingley had written in 1845. ⁹⁸

The next arduous task before Satguru Ram Singh was of deputing someone to Nanded. Absence of transport facilities in those days and abnormal length of the jungle-route consisting of 1400 Kos were the main hurdles before an adventurist traveler. ⁹⁹

Satguru Ram Singh deputed Bhai Rai Singh- a savant-resident of Mudihar village in Ferozepur district of Punjab, to Nanded with the instructions to bring the code in black and white including the details of the Sikh rites and ceremonies which were still observed there. ¹⁰⁰ In the mean time, he himself carried on his preaching tours which attracted innumerable followers around him by the time of return of Bhai Rai Singh, who had left only thirteen Sikhs with the Satguru but found 'an army of Sikhs' on his return. ¹⁰¹ These reformed Sikhs were called the Namdharis-i.e. persons whose lives were based on the holy Name of God. ¹⁰²

Satguru Ram Singh, continuing the old practice, whispered a secret word into the ear of the new comer. This manner also was not invented by the Namdharis. A Sikh scholar has traced the similarity of the mode and meaning etc. of the Name practiced among the Namdharis even to the Old Testament. ¹⁰³ On hearing the secret word, the neophyte would, like an inebriated person, forget all around him in ecstasy to the extent that he would not even notice his turban falling away. ¹⁰⁴ Ecstasy is related to the music or musical singing of the sacred hymns. It is the key to the Holy Name and is produced easily by music, musical singing or poetry. ¹⁰⁵

As a matter of fact, such an ecstasy has wrongly been attributed to the Namdharis as their peculiarity because a careful study of the Holy Granth reveals that such ecstasy had been practiced by the Sikh Gurus themselves too. ¹⁰⁶ During such ecstasy, like Mohammeden Sufi mystics, the Namdharis also at certain occasions shrieked loudly, so they are referred to as Kukas (shouters) as well. ¹⁰⁷

The English had assumed 'legal authority' in Punjab in March 1849. The social customs, religious taboos and tenets for them were not only curious but sometimes incomprehensible too. They were infatuated by them, took keen interest in their daily life routine and minutely observed their actions and practices though the knowledge very often was based on the information, right or wrong or biased, provided by their respective informers. Such ignorance is candidly and honestly admitted by Sir Denzil Ibbetson in his preface to the Census Report for the year 1881. ¹⁰⁸ At the same time it must be admitted that the records maintained by the British, however, contain very interesting, informative material and, in certain cases, prove to be the only authentic source of information on the Namdharis.

Satguru Ram Singh issued a circular letter from his headquarters at Bhaini (Sahib), addressed to all the men and women ¹⁰⁹ in which he included partly social and partly religious instructions which he desired to be implemented by his followers in letter and spirit. "Rise in the last watch of the night and purify your mouth

then bathe, read the scriptures, if they are not known, then acquire them by rote, every one, old women and maiden 'Jap' 'Jap' complete Raihras, Artisohila this much, be particular to learn. All practice virtue and continence. Worship the true God during the whole eight watches. ... Always hide your good deeds. Assemble often. Sing the scripture daily ..." ¹¹⁰ Major Perkins, District Superintendent of Police, added, that 'the converts are ordered to bathe the entire body and wash the hair of their heads every morning at three o'clock. "Pay attention to all, I have taught you, or your faces will be blackened in both worlds. Whoever commits theft, adultery, etc. let him not come to the Darbar, and if he tries to force his way, pray to the Guru to stop him." ¹¹¹

Many religions exclude individual person's food habits, dress or language etc out of the purview of the religion, as for instance, the Christianity. "When therefore we say of a religion cast in this type that it is non-missionary, we mean only that it cannot be communicated or entered without changing one's whole manner of life and habitual rules of society. And because we in England have long ago lost the notion that religion has anything to do with the food we eat, the clothes we wear, or the things we touch, we suppose that a religion thus bound up with a peculiar set of social rules, and resting not upon doctrine, but on custom, birth and status must be incommunicable beyond the society into the web of which it is thus woven." ¹¹²

"Under religion, in India is comprehended much that in Europe would be reckoned within the social sphere. In India, all questions of inter-marriage and of eating together, many question regarding occupations and the relations of earning members of a family to idle members are religious not social questions." ¹¹³ Guru Nanak goes to the extent of connecting language with religion and castigates Khatri, his own kinsmen, for having renounced their religion and adopting the language of the Malechhas. ¹¹⁴

The non-Indians therefore possibly can not understand the implications regarding the connection between the religion and food habits or early morning bath etc. stressed in Indian religious code. Some religion, for instance, may not have prescribed compulsory bath to its adherents but in eastern life these things mean much more and are indispensable, particularly in Hinduism and Sikh faith. The Sikhs were no longer practicing the injunction regarding the bath in those days or they observed it more in violation than in observation. ¹¹⁵

The early morning bath has been given much importance terming it as ambrosial bath in Sikh religion and finds mention in the scriptures at many places. ¹¹⁶ In the Indian religious tradition, early morning bath has been equated with the valuable things given in alms perhaps to attract those people who had been habitual to think in the terms of monetary gains. Satguru Ram Singh too adopted the same line. "One who takes complete bath (including

the washing of hair too) three hours before the sunrise and reads the hymns coupled with the meditations on the holy Name, is rewarded for having given pearls in alms," he wrote in one of his letters, "then of gold, then of silver, then of copper, then of corn, then of milk, then of water. The bath taken thereafter (after sun-rise) has no other utility than merely washing of one's body. This significance regarding the bath has been uttered by the tenth Guru himself..." ¹¹⁷ complete bath includes the washing of one's entire body including the hair. ¹¹⁸

The people regarded the efforts made by Satguru Ram Singh as an attempt on introducing his own inventions while the truth lied the other way. It therefore took a considerable time of the diligent and investigative minds to bring forth the reality. As a matter of fact the revivalism has nothing new. "Dissent ...thus has strong elements of revivalism, in fact, it also can and does become revivalism. But this not may be so if it accepts certain elements of the earlier faith and adds to them certain others which are such reinterpretations of the earlier forms by a logic of the Master that they stand at variance with the cardinal features." ¹¹⁹

Therefore there was "nothing new in the Kuka way of life, but intrinsically it is the religion of the Sikhs which has been revived and popularized by them anew," observed a contemporary Mohammedan historian. ¹²⁰ "When Sikhism revived, all its divisions resuscitated ... a notable example of this was furnished by the Kukas (shouters) who professed to be ethically strict followers of Gobind Singh..." ¹²¹

"It harked back to a way of life more in keeping with the spiritual traditions of the community. Its principal concern was to spread the true spirit of Sikhism shorn of a tawdry customs and mannerism which had grown on it since the beginning of Sikh monarchy." ¹²²

The plausible idea of a statesman very often grows into a movement that usually changes the course of events in the history. "A movement which is spontaneous in the beginning may become organized later on by centring round a leader or leaders. The process of social mobilization includes meeting, campaigns, demonstration, conferences, literature, which are expressive of interest and beliefs." This author then goes on to discuss the basic elements of a movement too. "Thus the three basic elements of a movement are collective action, ideology and interests and an orientation towards change." ¹²³ We shall see that the idea of reforming the Sikh religion soon attained the form of a popular multi-dimensional movement containing all the above-mentioned three basic elements. This movement, however, may neither be called solely the reform nor as the revivalist one but as 'reformists and revivalists at the same time' according to the categorization by Ray. ¹²⁴

During the infancy of the reform movement Satguru Ram Singh was looked upon as 'a successor or actual re-embodiment of Guru Nanak, ¹²⁵ the saint. Soon the

people started looking the qualities of Guru Gobind Singh in him because perhaps of his efforts for the revival of the Sikh code introduced originally by the tenth master. In his Justification of the peoples' positive approach, Kapur Singh considers it natural because after Guru Gobind Singh, there had been no other such reformer with such a bold soul, except Satguru Ram Singh, who might have aimed at such a lofty target of uplifting the society.¹²⁶ He "revived Guru Gobind Singh's ideology and tried to organize the Panth on the lines of Gobindian Republic... organized Sangats in villages and Subas to co-ordinate the activities of the Sangats in a circle or Suba. The Suba was a region consisting of some villages and the leader of the Suba was also known as a Suba. These Subas used to gather at Bhaini Sahib to receive instructions from the Baba which were directed towards purification of the life of the Sikhs and establishment of the Gobindian Republic through Sangats and Subas. The Panch, a fully developed Sikh came to be called a Sant(saint)."¹²⁷

A contemporary historian, who wrote history of the Sikh Gurus in Sanskrit, propitiates Satguru Ram Singh as a Guru in the line of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.¹²⁸ Evidently, such perception and belief prevailed amongst the intellectuals of those days till the end of the nineteenth century.¹²⁹ Imbued in spiritualism the soul of Prof. Puran Singh too regarded him as such. "The Khalsa chanted the song of the sword composed by Gobind Singh for their daily invigoration. He is said to have composed this song in adoration of some old Hindu goddess; but he merely employed the words used in Sanskrit literature in praise of an old goddess, adapting them to the praise of Steel. In recent history, under the leadership of Bhai Ram Singh, and inspired by the same old life-mantram, "Wahi-Guru", there again rose in the Punjab the semblance of the old Khalsa: the Kukas, whom the last generation saw sitting crosslegged in the posture of Yoga meditation, chanting this Song of the Sword, and springing to and fro-still in their sitting posture, like birds-to the accompaniment of their cry: "Sat Sri Akal. Sat Sri Akal. The original of this at Anandpur may be imagined...."¹³⁰ The author of Urdu book Khurshid-i-Khalsa goes to the extent of including him in the genealogical tree of the Sikh Gurus.¹³¹

A well-known Sikh scholar who had not subscribed to the tenets of Satguru Ram Singh, goes still a step farther. He visualizes deva in him. During the scholarly discussion on five types of human eyes, he elaborates the deva chakshu. "These devas or luminous beings, for obvious reasons, are not visible to physical human eyes. Five kinds of eyes, in addition to the human physical eyes, are enumerated in ancient Hindu scriptures." Going into details of the fifth kind of eye, he continues, "Eyes of Light: Guruchaksu, such are possessed by the Guru, Budha, capable in like manner, of seeing throughout eternity... Human beings, in which clairvoyant vision is induced by nama simran, or yogic dhyana, or in whom such vision exists from birth by virtue of pre-birth spiritual discipline, are alone

capable of seeing devas with the physical human eyes. Sometimes devas appear unexpectedly to ordinary human beings as well..." Here he cites a rare type of example in form of his personal experience. "The writer of these lines was blessed by such a vision, at about 11 A.M. on a June day in 1947 at Lahore, when Baba Ram Singh Kuka, in deva form, appeared to him and conversed with him."¹³²

The British officials also opined "that Ram Singh is endeavouring to effect a reform in the Sikh religion and some of his doctrines and precepts are not only harmless but also beneficial."¹³³ Many native officers "seemed to have a great respect for the tenets of the sect and agree that it is an effort to restore the Sikh religion to its original purity and to do away with the innovations which have crept into it" was observed in another report prepared by the state government.¹³⁴

Every new idea or movement is usually opposed by the vested interests. The reformer therefore has to face abnormal situations. Satguru Ram Singh was no exception. His precepts were opposed mostly by both the Sikh and Hindu clerics whose monetary interests seemed to be adversely affected. The Sikh clergy, who was apathetic towards its prescribed duty, went to the extent of awarding religious punishment to Satguru Ram Singh and his followers.¹³⁵

Calumnious canards were invented to camouflage the truth as well as to tarnish the image of the reformer with a view to dissuade the masses from following him. It was rumoured, for instance, that the watch-word he whispered in the ear of the neophyte was a Mohammedan qualm and that it was secretly whispered to conceal this fact while the truth was that he had adopted this manner of whispering according to the injunctions issued by the Gurus and contained in the Holy Granth.¹³⁶ Giani Gian Singh, a contemporary Punjabi historian, who had tested the truth of the matter through personal experience, had stultified the allegation.¹³⁷

Satguru Ram Singh had to cope with caluminators also. He, for instance, had addressed an epistle to the custodians of the Sikh historic shrine at Ananpur during his pilgrimage to that shrine on 20th March 1867 in which he had inter alia said, that they (clerics) act quite contrary to the Grunth" by eating meat, drinking, lying, licentiousness, female infanticide andc. and that therefore, Kookas do not consider them Sikhs."¹³⁸ The priests had to eat the humble pie and did not dare to issue any rejoinder.

The Brahmans opposed him rather physically. When Satguru Ram Singh on his return from religious fair at Hardiwar in 1918 Bk., arrived at the village Muthadda Kalan in Phillaur Tehsil of Jullundur district, the local Brahmans conspired to attack the Sikhs with the filthy, obnoxious and prohibited water from the smoking pipes which resulted in some skirmishes leaving the field with the Namdharis.¹³⁹ Surprisingly enough, the Brahmans did figure among his preachers too.¹⁴⁰

This type of ignoble calumination however did not affect the movement adversely. On the contrary, it rather played its role in popularizing the same. "Towards the close of the last century some of these observances were falling into disuse, but latterly owing to various factors there has been a great revival in Sikhism which has made a very marked advance."¹⁴¹

The perversion of the vested interests and the stiff opposition on the part of the clerics notwithstanding, the Kuka preaching gained popularity comparatively in lesser duration of time which was rather a miraculous and astonishing attainment. The villages and towns were impressed and influenced by the preachings of Satguru Ram Singh. Astounded at this, His contemporary historian Ghulam Bheekh recorded in his Urdu manuscript, "When Guru Nanak-the founder of the religion- started the proselytizing, he was not destined to have even one thousand persons among his followers within a period of ten years. His religion had flourished during the times of his successors. This founder (Ram Singh) got lakhs of Kukas during his life time."¹⁴² The British official reports substantiated the aforesaid assertion saying that "tenets of new faith had already gained credence of late in the pergunnahs of Umbala and Ladowa where now might be found some 15 villages composed almost of believers in Ram Singh."¹⁴³

The recruitment of the Namdharis or the Kukas, was reported to be on the increase in 1863,¹⁴⁴ particularly to the south of the Sutlej river.¹⁴⁵ The total Sikh population figuring at 11,41,848 in 1868¹⁴⁶ should not be very perplexing, keeping in view the distribution of 80,000 rosaries by Satguru Ram Singh to the neophytes in October 1866 only in Sealkote district as was reported by Captain Thulloch on 10th November 1866.¹⁴⁷ This district was regarded as a strong kuka holding and one of the 'chief centres'¹⁴⁸ in nineteenth century. It was compulsory for a newly initiated person to visit the Kuka headquarters at Bhaini¹⁴⁹ and costomary with the Satguru to give one rosary to each newly initiated person which symbolized approval of admission of the individual into the fraternity.

Mohammedans are usually believed not to join a non-Islamic religion but Satguru Ram Singh was reported to have many Mohammedans among his followers. "Ram Singh obtained some converts from among the Mohamadans who are told by Ram Singh and his Soobas that the Mohamdan and Kooka religion are the one. There are some Mohamadans who speak well of the Kooka religion."¹⁵⁰ Major Perkins had reported personal knowledge of two such converts in 1866.¹⁵¹

The most surprising and perplexing feature of the Namdhari movement was that its popularity did not remain confined to Punjab only but astonishingly transcended the borders of the country. Abdul Razak- a noble man from Kabul (Afghanistan)- was reported to have "sent his two sons on a mission to Bhaini, It is supposed, to learn Ram Singh's doctrines."¹⁵²

This popularity was ascribed by different people to

various factors. The British officials thought it to be the result of the organizational skill of the Kuka leaders.¹⁵³ This perhaps was based on the fact that Satguru Ram Singh had divided the land into 22 preaching zones, putting each zone under one representative called Suba (lieutenant) duly authorised to conduct the initiation work as well as attending to the problems faced by the Sikhs. Some reports curiously point to the monetary benefits as the deciding factor. "Kuka converts are put to no expenses whereas to Sikhism are," was disclosed by the Inspector Fazul Hoosain, adding that the Nihungs charged one rupee from each new convert while Kukas baptized the person free of any charge.¹⁵⁴ Bingley discloses another point, that if a (non-Namdhari) Sikh wanted to take the pahul(baptism) for the second time 'he must in addition pay a fine' which could go upto five rupees.¹⁵⁵

Still another historian puts the magical oration of the Guru as a leading factor responsible for swelling the numbers of Namdharis.¹⁵⁶ The Russian scholars find altogether new reasons which were the religious severity and the democratic system due to which the 'Namdhari movement attracted the large sections of the rural as well as the urban population into it.'¹⁵⁷ An official report alludes to the simplest and the cheapest marriage ceremony incurring 'moderate expenditure', introduced by Satguru Ram Singh as the reason behind the public attraction towards the Namdharis.¹⁵⁸

The actual number of the followers of Satguru Ram Singh had become a riddle even for the officials of the state government. "Material is wanting for any accurate measure of the number of Ram Singh's followers ... We possess no accurate census of the population of the Punjab. And the reasons which have hitherto hindered its being taken apply with still greater force to an attempt to obtain an accurate statement of the numbers of a new religious sect,"¹⁵⁹ was confessed by the administration in February 1867. A Delhi newspaper had assessed their strength at 60,000 in 1866.¹⁶⁰ while the Christian missionary, Rev.J.S.Woodside, of the Ludhiana Presbyterian Mission, had put this number at 100,000 in 1867.¹⁶¹

Satguru Ram Singh first of all endeavoured to restore some fundamental principles of the Sikh religion previously laid down by Guru Gobind Singh. "But there are other customs which we know are not subject to change because they are more essential or fundamental, such as obedience to parents, and civil authority, telling the truth... and keeping our promises. Morals is a code of right and wrong human actions which each individual establishes for himself by natural inclination, ethics is a scientific discussion of morals."¹⁶²

He therefore stressed the individual morality of the person. He usually would ask the people to forsake all the vices that had become part and parcel of the Punjabi life. "They (Kukas) inculcate a very strict morality condemning most strongly lying, theft, and adultery and appears anxious merely to revive the Sikh religion to its original state of purity."¹⁶³ Major Perkins

goes a little deep in details and adds that "All vices are supposed to be foresworn such as lying, stealing, drinking, adultery etc. and are strictly forbidden. Kukas so offending are punished by a Panchayat." ¹⁶⁴

The introduction of punishment for the transgression of the code was perhaps introduced for the first time by Satguru Ram Singh. It 'has three purposes. One looks to the past and two to the future. As looking to the past punishment is called retributive or vindictive. Retributive because it restores the order of justice which has been disturbed by an evil act, vindictive because it upholds the law by putting down the one who has risen up against it by his evil act. As looking towards the future, punishment has two purposes. It is corrective if the purpose is to reform or improve the evil doer, it is deterrent if its purpose is to prevent others from committing the same evil by showing them what happens to such evil doers." ¹⁶⁵ This hypothesis reveals the benefits of punishment awarded by Satguru Ram Singh to any transgressor. And this perhaps was why the Namdharis were regarded as the 'punctilious followers of Gobind Singh.' ¹⁶⁶

This characteristic may be substantiated by a few examples from the history which show how much specific and strict these people had been on the question of the implementation of the injunctions. A thief impressed by the moral preachings desired to embrace this faith. On being told to abjure all vices, he confessed that at that time a stolen mare

worth Rupees six hundred was standing at his home. He was directed to return the stolen mare to its original owner before joining the faith and that direction was readily acted upon. ¹⁶⁷

The use of intoxicants was prohibited with equal severity. Baba Darbara Singh, for instance, too was asked about his habits at the time of his initiation. Making startling confession he disclosed that he was a hard drinker, distilling his liquor from 500 male-sparrows, 100 cocks and five male goats in addition to the customary material.

Besides, he was such an addicted opium smoker that he used to stick the drug to the leaves of the trees standing on the village pathways so that it may be readily available if required during the stroll. He as usual was asked by Satguru Ram Singh to get rid of both the intoxicants, which he did at the spot. ¹⁶⁸

"The effect of Guru Ram Singh's teachings on some of his followers was remarkable," observes Narang, "Another of his followers who had committed a murder long before he became his disciple in the District of Gujranwala went to the District Magistrate, after he had joined the sect, and made a confession of such a serious offence, which was punishable with death, after such a long time. He said it was all due to the grace of Guru Ram Singh." ¹⁶⁹

The Sikh Gurus had retained the food habits adopted by earlier protagonists of the Bhakti movement who had divided the individual food into three categories of

rajasa, tamasa and satvika. The last one is preferred for the religious minded people as it is necessary for survival of a mortal ¹⁷⁰ and helps restoring peace of one's mind which is so necessary for spiritual development and ultimate goal of the seeker-the union with the Supreme.

The Gurus had condemned that kind of food, which causes physical illness and growth of vices in mind. ¹⁷¹ "He (Guru Nanak) respected the Hindu veneration of the cow and the Mohammadan abhorrence of the hog, but recommended as a higher rule than either, total abstinence from flesh." ¹⁷² The Sikhs in nineteenth century had changed to the prohibited tamasa kind of food consisting of animal flesh and alcoholic drinks etc.

Satguru Ram Singh inculcated the food consciousness among his followers to such an extent that they would, in conformance to the scriptural injunction, refrain from eating from a person condemned for immorality ¹⁷³ as there had been popular belief in India that such food may not only adversely affect one's spiritual progress but also can affect the birth of an individual. ¹⁷⁴

The report submitted by Major Perkins that "A Kuka may not eat food prepared by outsiders and in support of this assertion it may be added that some Kukas in the Ferozepur lock up declined to receive jail cooked food," ¹⁷⁵ seems to be the result of the aliens' ignorance of the Indian culture because such food discipline had been the part of the Indian religious life in the past. The Sikhs observed it in letter and spirit. ¹⁷⁶

In Sikhism, "The Hindu usage regarding diet is also held equally sacred, no Sikh, descended from a Hindu family, ever violating it, except upon particular occasion, such as a Gur-matta, when they are obliged by their tenets and institutions to eat promiscuously." ¹⁷⁷ "Strictly speaking, the Sikh father can not eat with his own son until the latter has taken the Kakke Ka pahul." ¹⁷⁸ Having received the pahul, even the persons from lower castes gave up as much social intercourse with the unconverted members of their tribes as they possibly could." ¹⁷⁹

The Namdharis had only adopted the centuries old food discipline and preserved it for the posterity. Not to speak of the Sikhs, such distinction existed most surprisingly even among the Indian Christians though shown on some other basis. "Among Indian Christians caste is prevalent. Untouchable Christians are not received in a 'whole-hearted way. Sometimes Christians of higher caste refuse to eat or smoke with them". ¹⁸⁰ Bringing out such distinction was perhaps the political compulsion of the foreign rulers consolidating their rule in Punjab.

The people mistook such rigid food disciplinary injunction as the invention of Satguru Ram Singh himself. This presumption had given birth to a folk song condemning their peculiar nature:

The Kukas are very bad,

They would lend their pot to none,
To bathe with. ¹⁸¹

Satguru Ram Singh himself acted in the same way as he desired his followers to do... He visited the Amritsar district in 1866 where Sardar Shamsher Singh of Rajasansi paid a visit to him. Captain Wall reported in Jan 1867 about the rumour to the effect that this nobleman had embraced the Kukaism. ¹⁸² The Sardar requested the Guru to take some food. Satguru Ram Singh asked the former to amend his food habits. The Sardar expressed his inability to abandon the flesh foods. The Guru retorted then: in case you can not get rid of that habit, then keep your hand away from the bridle of my mare' and left the place. ¹⁸³

The Sikhs by the passage of time, had lost all the regards and reverence for their scriptures, particularly the Holy Granth. Satguru Ram Singh during his preaching campaigns would take the sacred volume out of its resting place and would dust it off with his own turban to be followed by the instructions to the masses regarding its respect, reverence and reading etc. With a view to popularize the scriptural reading among the people, he emphasized the learning by heart the book of prayers called Panj Granthi or the compiled five sacred books which contains the selection from the Holy Granth.

With a view to propagate the scriptural reading, he himself ventured to get litho edition of the Holy Granth published from the Aftab-i-Punjab Press owned by Dewan Buta Singh of Lahore.

The Nirmalas are regarded as the pedants among the Sikhs. Satguru Ram Singh openly criticised them for diverting the masses' attention from the Sikh scriptures and directing them towards the Vedas. Such a remark had resulted in the scuffle between both the sects during the religious festival of Ardh kumbh at Haridwar. ¹⁸⁴

Worshipping of tombs, cenotaphs and graves etc. has no place in the Sikh religion and had been condemned by the Gurus ¹⁸⁵ but during the period under study, the Sikh visitors to such shrines or places outnumbered the non-Sikhs. Satguru Ram Singh made the people understand the futility of such worship and brought them back to the right path. With a view to practically vindicate the assertion, a large number of his followers attacked and demolished such places at many localities. "It has been mentioned that the conduct of Ram Singh's followers has on the whole been orderly, the only offences which they have as yet been guilty of as a sect have been the destruction of Tombs, idols andc. ¹⁸⁶

During this campaign, in some cases the Kukas were identified as the perpetrators of the 'crime' and were tried while at some others none was identified though in certain cases no evidence was 'obtainable'. This campaign was carried out mostly in Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Ferozepur, Gujranawala and Bhatinda districts. During his trial in one of such cases related to Ferozepur, one defendant had stated that "we do not

respect shrines or tombs of ordinary men..." ¹⁸⁷ In one such case three Kukas were awarded three months' imprisonment and a fine of twenty rupees each. ¹⁸⁸

Dhonkal is a village situated near Wazirabad in Sealkot area where a shrine of Sakhi Sarwar son of Sultan Zain ul Abadin attracted innumerable worshippers in the summer season. ¹⁸⁹ The Namdharis attacked this shrine and the huge bronze bell adorning the shrine brought to their headquarters which was utilized in the common kitchen. ¹⁹⁰

It is commonly believed that the wars fought all over the world in the name of religion outnumber those fought on other questions. The religious intolerance is stated to be the leading factor behind such catastrophes. Satguru Ram Singh loved peace, so he stressed the need of the communal harmony, tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Due to such an approach his assemblies were reported to be attended by all sorts of people including opinionated ones. Even Sodhis of Anandpur, the descendants of Guru Gobind Singh, who were opposed to his preachings in the beginning, were reported to have embraced his faith during his pilgrimage to the shrine in March 1867. ¹⁹¹ He ordained his followers to be tolerant towards even a butcher with blood soaked dagger in his hand. In case he is not provided with food on his demand, the offender would never be forgiven ¹⁹² though, on the other hand, he vehemently preached for the protection of the cow regarding it a sacred animal as all the Sikh Gurus had done. ¹⁹³

The use of blue colour is prohibited among his followers ¹⁹⁴ because its preparation compulsorily needs mixture of kine blood into indigo and kine blood can only be obtained by kine- killing which is a heinous crime in Sikh religion. ¹⁹⁵ When Satguru Ram Singh visited the Sikh shrine at Mukatsar, the clergy with a view to enrage and to test his amicable nature intentionally presented him a robe of blue cloth which he accepted without any hesitation just as a mark of respect for sake of reconciliation. ¹⁹⁶

"A new faith creates a new world in which old conceptions and institutions may lose their meaning and reason-d' etre. Natural and historical data become abrogated, and a new order of things replaces the old. These changes may be revolutionary much depending upon the extent to which a reinterpretation (consecration) of the traditional element is possible. The preaching of a new faith, even if it should be of a universal character, is addressed primarily to one group of people which may be more or less homogeneous. In culturally higher, differentiated societies the background of the converts is often very heterogeneous." ¹⁹⁷ Satguru Ram Singh had to deal with such a population .

As a matter of fact, the Namdhari movement was a kind of religio-social revolution. "A revolution is seldom experienced by the dispossessed in whose favour it is supposed to be, for it is often brought about by a small group of highly dedicated, ideologically ruined men

who belong to an unstable transitional class." ¹⁹⁸ Satguru Ram Singh is regarded by some historians as 'having an revolutionary ideal' ¹⁹⁹ His movement was no short of a revolution though it would be more appropriate to call it a puritannical one. ²⁰⁰ A South Indian intellectual sitting in Madras-thousand miles away from Punjab- had invented this term for it while equating the Guru to fifteenth century European reformer Martin Luther. "Ram Singh was essentially a reformer, and like all reformers, a bigot. His object was not to overthrow the Sikh religion but to purify it. He was, or wished to be the Luther of the Punjab, and his followers to be the Protestants or rather Puritans of the Sikh faith, which was to be brought as near to what it was under Guru Nanak Shah as possible." ²⁰¹

Satguru Ram Singh had fully succeeded in his objective of restoring the pristine purity of the religion of the Sikh Gurus. While discussing the success of revivalist movement and its success, very often the example of the strenuous efforts made and the success achieved by this reformer is cited by the sober and serious scholars.

"For specimens of second mode we may take the accounts of the Kookas in the Punjab. ...The Punjab report for that year (1872) which in this part of it reads like the letter of some legate addressed to the Emperor from one of the Asiatic provinces of Imperial Rome, sets forth how "Ram Singh, the leader of the sect, a man of considerable ability, was the son of a carpenter, who gradually acquired a reputation of extreme sanctity, and even for the possession of miraculous powers..." ²⁰²

The people, particularly of Punjab, whom Mohanlal called 'filthy' because, according to his observation, they never bathed or washed their faces, ²⁰³ were made to take a complete bath very early in the morning. These Sikhs were strict to wear the immaculate white dress adopted by the founders of the religion along with the woollen rosary and the straight white turban which is described in the official records as insignia of them and which the Europeans including Griffin, partly due perhaps to his ignorance of the earlier tradition and partly to the apathy of the Sikhs towards it, regards as 'peculiar dress' ²⁰⁴ It was called 'Sidha pag' (straight turban) merely because the Sikh Gurus had adopted it. The author of these lines had seen in a museum a picture even of Maharaja Ranjit Singh wearing similar round turban.

The Namdharis practised and maintained such a high morality that there had been never a complaint of any immoral practice or sexual assault against any person despite the fact that the women used to refrain from veil and 'men and women rave together at his (Ram Singh's) meetings, and thousands of women and young girls have joined the sect." ²⁰⁵ An idle man is devil's workshop. Satguru Ram Singh keeping this adage in view did not allow his followers to remain idle because he had made very busy daily schedule for both the family-men and mendicants which prescribed more religious activities for the mendicant in comparison to

the family-man. ²⁰⁶ The high morality of the Namdharis seemed to have led Ghulam Bheekh to believe that one would have seldom seen any wicked person among them. ²⁰⁷

In his eyewitness - account, Punjabi historian, Giani Gian Singh equates the condition of the Sikhism at that time to that of the wilted vegetation, the resuscitation of which is considered very adventurous. This miraculous task of reviving the same was performed by Satguru Ram Singh in such a way and to such a high level that the wilted vegetation of Sikhism had become incredibly lushgreen. ²⁰⁸

Another remarkable point of achievements of satguru Ram Singh was that his followers succeeded in maintaining their distinguishing identity while other Sikhs had lost all the features of identifying distinction. "...caste has to some extent been reintroduced and now a days some persons calling themselves "Singhs" may only be distinguished from other Hindus by the fact that they refrain from the use of tobacco or wear the kes" ²⁰⁹

Even the census report for 1901 presented much worse a picture in this respect. Mr. Rose had lamented "It is not easy to say what is the distinctive creed of Sikhism. It is nearly always difficult to state a religious creed, and in the case of Sikhism, there is the great difficulty, that the Gurus from the first to last, like the modern Hindu reformers not to break away from the ancient beliefs but to reconcile them with a pure creed. Unfortunately, this resulted, as probably it always must result, in a medley of beliefs so that within Sikhism we find many religious ideas at variance with its ideal creed... But this creed is probably accepted and acted up to by a very small number even by those who call themselves true Sikhs." ²¹⁰

"The Kuchh or short drawers the wearing of which was formerly compulsory among Sikhs, are now seldom seen except among Kukas and Akalis and the village grey beards...This is survival of the old Sidha pag or true Sikh turban which consists of twelve yards of cloth, and completely protected the head from sword cuts. It is now only worn by old men and Kukas," observed Bingley. ²¹¹ Similar had been the case of rosary. The Namdharis were the only among the Sikhs to use the traditional woollen rosary as the ordinary Sikhs had started keeping one made of iron. ²¹²

The sum and substance of the matter is that Satguru Ram Singh had many firsts to his credit. Administration of the baptism to the womenfolk was reserved for him. This ceremony was inaugurated in June 1863 at the village Siarh in Ludhiana district when they were enjoined to wear the short drawer like their male counterparts. ²¹³ This day is still commemorated annually at that village. This step undoubtedly proved to be a milestone in the upliftment of the downtrodden women as this brought them equal to the men in religio-social field.

A mystic Mohammedan poet had remarked that 'had there been no Guru Gobind Singh, all the Indians must have been circumcised' ²¹⁴ implying that they would have been forcibly converted to the Islam. Similarly had there been no revivalism by Satguru Ram Singh there would have no Sikhs and the following forecast made by some ambitious Christian in some English newspaper would have become a truth: 'Just as we do not see any Budhists in the country except in images, in the same fashion the Sikhs, who are now, here and there, visible in turbans and their other religious forms like wrist bangles and swords, will be seen only in picture in museums. Their sons and grand sons turning Christians and clad in coats and trousers and supporting road stool like caps will go to see them in the museums and say in their pidgin Punjabi: Look, that is the picture of a Sikh-the tribe that inhabited this country once upon a time.' ²¹⁵

The foregoing is the bird's eye view of the strenuous efforts made by Satguru Ram Singh for the revival of

the faith of the Gurus. It can easily be noted by a sober reader as to how hordes of thugs, dacaoits, thieves, adulterators, ophiloaters, tomb worshippers, addicts to narcotic drugs, atheists, criminals and such other people were transformed by him. The so-called dregs of the society were deified to the angels. Credit for producing a galaxy of saints and the spiritualists with incredible supernatural powers ²¹⁶ indubitably goes to him. Such rejuvenation of the Sikh society by Satguru Ram Singh was described by a contemporary historian as the commencement of the Golden Age. ²¹⁷

But it is most unfortunate and regrettable that all his sincere and strenuous efforts fell victim to the ignorance of a few, dichotomy of the minority and the bias of the majority of the historians of the independent India who in their nefarious design to prove more loyal than the king himself have made equally concerted attempts to push such a praiseworthy son of the soil to the oblivion.

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VPO Shahpur, Via Phillaur, Dist. Jalandhar. Pb. India. PIN-144410.

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The Darbar of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

by Hasan al Din, c.1850 Punjab Plains, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, San Diego Museum of Art (acc. no. 1990 : 1351)



Gender Equality and Satguru Ram Singh Ji

Charanjit Ajit Singh



Satguru Ram Singh ji during their auspicious lifetime introduced social reform which includes:

'Do not kill a girl or barter her. Neither should you take any money of her. You should have no relationship with the person who kills a girl, sells a girl or exchange her with another (such as marrying your daughter to somebody's son and taking his daughter as a wife for your own son).'

'Conduct the wedding of your daughter when she is eighteen and a boy when he reaches twenty, and not before.'

The above words are taken from two of the many letters (hukamnamas), Satguru Ram Singh ji wrote when Satguru Ram Singh ji was in prison in exile in Burma after 1872 and illustrate his huge concern for the position in which women and girls found themselves in. He called such heinous acts as the gravest of sins.

If we study the social history of nineteenth century India, it was quite common among certain groups to kill a girl at birth or bury her alive. If this was not done she most probably married off as a child, the parents had to give dowry to her husband's family which may well be beyond their means. Life expectancy was low and if her husband died or was killed in war, she led the life of complete misery and poverty as a denounced widow. The Gurus had given the women in the community tremendous boost through giving them the opportunity to participate in worship at an equal level, stopping female infanticide, encouraging simpler wedding ceremonies and widow remarriage. Still the broad cultural traditions and caste hierarchies continued and the impact of the Gurus' reforms particularly after the defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of the English in 1845 got lost in the malaise of moral degradation.

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It is very fortuitous that as we celebrate the 150 years of the recreation of the Khalsa in 1857 by Satguru Ram Singh ji, we also give heartfelt thanks in gratitude to him for putting us on the path to gender equality, through his preaching and practical actions, in an age of systematic social, religious, economic and political discrimination. It was during that period that the Sikh women were also initiated through the partaking of 'Amrit' by them. The Namdhari belief is that it was Satguru Ram Singh ji who brought the equality of initiation to women because it did not happen at the time of Satguru Gobind Singh ji when the Khalsa was created.

Satguru Ram Singh ji's vision was of a society with a strong moral fibre in which men and women played an equal part. He knew the importance of girl's education as a vehicle of social and religious reform and told parents to teach their daughters literacy skills in Gurmukhi, so that they could have direct access to the scriptures. Both sons and daughters were enjoined to learn the daily prayers by heart so that they could perform them at the prescribed times wherever they might be, as well as meditating on the received 'Naam'.

In 1863, the practice of mass weddings was introduced to enable families to gather together at special events in the religious calendar and to remove the pressure on them of costly ceremonies and to create a more united inter-caste community. Caste being no barrier to a spiritual union between two people and the social coming together of families. This 'Anand Marriage' ceremony, in which the reading of the wedding hymns from Sri Adi Granth Sahib, the holy scripture was done for the first time, set a precedent for the wider Sikh community to free themselves of the priestly class who had subjugated them in unnecessary complicated and costly ritual. Satguru Ram Singh Ji's stress on two adults taking on the responsibility of a married couple in an age when children could be entered into wedlock without understanding its implications, was far ahead of its time and it is essential that it is not forgotten but built upon in the present

context.

Satguru Ram Singh ji exalted women to become Subas, district preachers for administering to the religious and spiritual needs of the locality. Women like Bibi Hukmi were formidable in their areas such as the Ludhiana District for actively engaging in promoting deeper religious understanding as well as inculcating the message of freedom from colonial rule.

Those who have studied the history of women's struggle for equal rights in the UK would know that it was a long, dangerous and difficult path in the 20th century to gain the right to vote and to gain the right to be a preacher. In certain religious communities such rights are hard to come by, though some women are making some headway. The medical technology has advanced tremendously in improving women's health and longevity but it is being used in India and particularly in the Punjab for gender identification and for subsequent abortion of the female foetus. The 2001 census shows that for 0-6 age group there are 786 girls to 1000 boys. This is a huge demographic concern which would have adverse effect on society. The current spiritual leader of the Namdhari Sikhs Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh ji has commanded the community not to engage in such sinful practices but to honour the female foetus as gift.

The hukamnamas of Satguru Ram Singh ji give us the way forward for our society's welfare, progress, continuity, peace and happiness. It is high time that we model ourselves on his teachings so that we can become worthwhile practitioners of the moral principles and with God's benign mercy upon us, guardians of present heritage and future prosperity.

Relevance of Namdhari Sikh Principles

Tara Singh Anjan

In the word "Namdhari" there is prominence of the word Naam; "*Naam*" is that of Almighty God. To tell one's deeds for this *Naam* is the character of the Namdhari Sikhs. By reciting *Naam*, the Namdharis feel happy, feel relaxed. Their perplexity reduces and mindset stabilises, and believe that they have sown the righteous seeds for the betterment of this world and heavenly abode.

Man does lots of things to achieve happiness; be it by acquiring wealth, in order to buy each and every pleasure, but remains unsuccessful. That is why a lion's share of wealth of riches goes to medicine, fun and frolic, narcotics and intoxicants all leading to worry, anxiety and deteriorating peace of mind and unhappiness.

In search of mental serenity, they go to Mahatamas, Swamis, Bapus, Babas, Maharajas, Guru-Mata, Sants Sages and the like. They may feel relieved temporarily by listening to discourses of such people, but ultimately but the liberation of minds can only be brought about by *Naam*. Realising the need, the usage of religious channels and inclination of people towards those is rising. Millions of people are inclining towards religion in East as well as the West. The relevance is to embrace *Naam*, which has been mentioned as *amrit*, gem, *mahanras*, treasure.

However you cannot have *Naam* on your own, this is Gurmantar, where the Mantar can only be received from the Guru. There cannot be second thought that Guru is the manifestation of Almighty Himself in human form. In Sikh Panth, the Guru tradition has begun from Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Every religious place and every religion has adopted its own prayer and discourse methodology, be it Temple, Mosque, Mutt or Church, there is always a preacher. Similarly in the Sikh Panth there are Gurdwaras. Within these Gurdwaras, one faction among Sikhs has assumed the Sri Adi Granth Sahib Ji as a Guru instead of a embodied living Guru. They literally explains the meaning of words "Shabad Guru, Bani Guru" which are mentioned in scripture. This faction bows before places of Babas, Sants and recognise their Kirtan and discourses beyond its own beliefs. These Gurdwaras are managed by committees. All Gurudwaras has got their recognition, but those which are of historical relevance or have better repute. A Guru may have visited the place, a miracle performed or the Guru blessed some one there. Moreover if anyone wants to renege from embodied Guru on the basis of *Gurbani*, then it must be considered that the same *Gurbani* was written by each Guru to praise his own embodied Guru. With reference to Guru, it is mentioned in the *Gurbani*, that he gives mantra in

your ear, visits / puts his feet, pats the back, eats food, wear clothes. That Satguru is the one who knows Almighty "Gur Rasna Amrit Boldi Hari Naam Suhavi". More than often than not, to support their side, *Gurbani* of that Guru is quoted, when in fact the scripture was not even compiled as Bir (holybook). Even after compilation of *Gurbani* into scripture by Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, at least 5 embodied Gurus of Sikhs continued the lineage. The objective of composing Bani was to present Sikh ideology.

The Namdhari Sikh *maryada* is that Namdharis believe in living Guru - the Satguru. Presently, Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji exhorts the Namdhari Sikhs to live life based on the teachings of the *Gurbani*. Historical places of importance for the Namdhari Sikhs and indeed for all Sikhs include all places where all our Gurus visited bit in addition Raiyan, Sri Bhaini Sahib, Amritsar, Raikot, Malerkotla, Sri Jeevan Nagar have to be included.

However for them the most important place is where Sri Satguru Ji is present, a glimpse of Sri Sat Guru is pilgrimage for them. Sri Sat Gurus guidance, especially spiritual, is ever lasting. There is no substitute of His guidance.

Namdhari Sikhs follow that *Rahet Maryada* which is evolved by Satguru Ji. This *maryada* is important in their daily life with a view of making life simple and comfortable.

In the Sikh world today there is a campaign to make Sikhs *amritdhari*. However, Namdhari Sikhs have made this *maryada* a part of their lives. Each and every Namdhari is *amritdhari*. *Amrit* is mandatory not only for men but for women also. *Amrit* is administered to the couple at the time of marriage. On the ceremony of returning back to household chores after giving birth *amrit* is administered to women, as well as the newborn baby. Those who are to be administered *Amrit*, must keep 5 *Kakar viz Kesh, Kangha, Kara, Kirpan and Kachhehra*.

Maryada of Namdhari Sikhs emphasises cleanliness and purity. Having a full body bath (head to toe) using water gathered from natural sources is compulsory. To maintain his *Garva* (iron vessel) of water is the recognition of a Namdhari Sikh. Its modern equivalent is keeping personal water bottle. The perception is to drink clean, pure Aqua fresh clean water. Presently, people only consider cleanliness of the water is considered important, but hopefully the importance of water's sanctity besides cleanliness will also be understood.

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Being the true adherent of *gurmat*, the Namdhari Sikhs consumes a vegetarian and intoxicant free diet. They realize that eating tamsic (evil) food by one who is having righteous and virtuous life is not appropriate. Killing is against *gurmat* and anti-animal protection. Killing takes away the feeling of mercy from ones inner self. According to Kabir Ji Jhatka and halal both are not good because of destroying piety from human beings.

If man eats meat then any diseases of these animals are transferred to humans. Ecological balance of nature is disturbed by animal slaughtering and some species are on the verge of extinction and some have already become extinct.

Moreover, the researchers of health sciences have also mentioned that vegetarian food is better than non-vegetarian, beneficial for health, cheaper and free from diseases.

It is interesting to note that there are increasing number of people living in western countries, are returning back to vegetarianism. Vegetarianism means to refrain from meat, fish, egg and any by products.

Intoxicants are not permitted by any religion because their consumption develops physical and mental weakness. Each and every intoxicant - poppy, opium, liquor, *Charas*, *Ganja*, *Hashish*, *Smack*, Brown-sugar harm the human body, makes people addicts and violent as well as having a detrimental effect on families and creating social tensions. To keep people away from such substances campaigns are in progress and governments are providing aid to the health departments to aid people overcome these addictions.

Virtuous conduct and values of Namdhari Sikhs are also relevant. On one hand, it helps to rise beyond lust, anger, greed resulting in enhanced human character and calm, simple and deceit less life. On the other hand, due to morality human being remains safe from unfortunate diseases like AIDS.

Namdhari Sikhs are sticking to the principles of respecting women, her education and protecting her from the yoke of dowry. They do not indulge in female infanticide; hence gender ratio among Namdhari Sikhs is well balanced. Protecting and promoting girl child has become the need of hour in light of acute gender ratio in Punjab (774 among 0-6yrs age group). Today, a baby girl is killed not immediately after birth, but even before birth by abortion. Hence, gender ratio has become much skewed. So to address this problem, laws are being enacted, social awareness is being developed. That's how Namdhari principles are becoming relevant for launching a public movement against this inhuman practice.

Today when families are breaking apart, Namdhari Sikhs are being kept together by threads of social relations, among those are respecting, caring and tendering for elders. They are attached to their origin and roots, their tradition, their maryada. Despite being in far flung foreign areas, Satguru Ji is there to unite them together into a single coherent family unit. Sri Sat Guru Ji is their spiritual guide, social preceptor and guide of virtuous values. His words and actions enlighten the path of everybody.

The relevance of Namdhari attire is in their distinct identity and personal recognition. In the words of Giani Gian Singh

They are distinguished by their white dress, white
woollen rosary,

Straight turban and flowing beard.

They perform Havan,

Recite hymns from Guru-Granth.

They are the **true followers of Guru Gobind Singh**,
Sri Guru Panth Prakash

Their white clothes, round turban on the heads of Singhs, satjugi appearance symbolises high morals, truth and purity - a virtuous life free from fraud, deceit, lying, cheating. Namdhari Sikhs has got love in their hearts, for family, religion, nation, humanity, animals, and vegetation.

Awareness of peace, association, togetherness, warmth of proximity enlightens the path to live and let others live. It encourages and galvanizes to do summits to create world peace. The possibility to curb terrorism at world level enhances with it. Terrorist hands would look to become hardworking hands, brotherly relations grow. Entire world looks like your own family and puts an end to negative tendencies and to expand positive tendencies in humans. Namdhari principles are relevant because enmity fades away with it and envy breaks off. The road leading to dejection, apathy, demoralisation gets cut off. Affluence becomes materialistic and economic too because nothing gets spent unnecessarily on the vice and lewdness. It is spiritual too because soul gets purified and by meditating on Naam, inclination towards help and support, worship and devotion increases. The Namdhari Sikhs are taught to respect and honour others. They are also taught to care for animals, above all, they are taught by Satguru Ji to oppose terrorism and stand for world peace. The Namdhari maryada and traditions are relevant for the world, not only entire Sikh Panth, but the whole world can be benefited by it.

.... sant, satjug aa gayo

Anjan Saggu

ਔਰੈ ਰੀਤ, ਔਰੈ ਮੀਤ, ਔਰੈ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ, ਪ੍ਰੀਤ,
 ਖਾਨ ਪਹਿਰਾਨ ਗਯਾਨ, ਮਾਨ, ਔਰੈ ਜਨ ਕੈ ।
 ਡਾਰੇ ਦਸਤਾਰੇ, ਸਾਢੇ ਭਾਰੇ ਹੈਂ ਸੰਭਾਰੇ,
 ਕਛੈ ਤਜ ਗਏ, ਧੋਤੀ ਸੁਥੁ ਸੰਗ ਤਨ ਕੈ ।
 ਧਾਰੇ ਹੈਂ ਗਰਾਰੇ, ਤੰਬੇ, ਤਹਮਤ ਅਧਿਕ ਲੰਬੇ
 ਜਿਨੈ ਦੇਖ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਗਊ ਕੰਬੈ, ਤੁਰਕ ਗਨ ਕੈ ।
 ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਸ਼ਮੇਸ਼ ਕੀ ਸੁ ਕੀ ਅਪਰ ਦੇਸ ਦੀ,
 ਅਸਿੱਖੀ ਭਰੀ ਪੇਸ਼ਗੀ ਛਿਨਾਰ ਬਨ ਠਨ ਕੈ ।

-ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ।

The words of Giani Gian Singh, a prominent Sikh scholar, unmistakably portray the state of Sikhi of Dasam Patshah Ji by the mid nineteenth century. Giani ji says that the Khalsa renounced the principles & ideals as established by Dasam Patshah Ji. Its customs, traditions and daily-routines did not remain in tune with Sikhi values and morals, rather it became those of anti-sikhs, and the unfaithfuls.

When the Sikh panth was going further down the road of loose morals, Satguru Ram Singh Ji considered the moral code of Dasam Patshah Ji as supreme code of conduct. However it was obligatory to rectify the shortcomings that crept in due to passage of time. There was a need to further add such ideals such as following an honest way of living, resulting in the betterment and furtherance of the code of conduct in the Sikh panth.

For this objective Vaisakhi 1914 Bikrami (12 April 1857) was planned. Satguru Ram Singh Ji rejuvenated the fade out Sikhi of Dasam Patshah Ji by administering Amrit to five Sikh followers. To attain the objective of betterment and furtherance of Sikhi, Satguru Ji gave a new direction in social, political and religious domains. For singing hymns in high pitch, this new panth was called Kuka. As the Naam, this can only be obtained from a Guru. The Guru is the nucleus of this panth that is why it is also called Namdhari.

The meaning of Dharam is not limited to only religion rather it includes values and beliefs and extends to duty. If the objective is to change someone's values and beliefs, foreign rulers endeavour to change the religious ideology of natives. A successful change in religious ideology of natives would result in changed values and beliefs in commensuration with that of rulers' eventually extending the life of ruling class. So the need of the hour was to stand firm on our indigenous religious values and beliefs, to become hand in glove with

our culture, philosophy and traditions. Those who have confidence in their religious values and beliefs can stand for their community and motherland.

Satguru Ram Singh Ji made formal initiation by administering Amrit compulsory to all who wanted to be Namdhari. All were ordered to keep 5-K's Kes, Kangha, Kara, Kachhehra and Kirpan. As carrying long Kirpan was prohibited by the government at the time, Sat Guru Ji ordered followers to carry the symbolic one, which is tied to the Kangha. Sat Guru Ji also ordered followers to get up early in the morning well before dawn, have a head to toe bath, meditate on the Name of God, read scriptures, recite name even while doing day-today work. Sat Guru Ji forbade praying graves, peer, fakir. The reading and ceremonial closing of scriptures from Sri Adi Granth Sahib and Sri Dasam Granth Sahib was vital.

Beside religious orders, honest and truthful living was also mandated. Followers were instructed to repay the debts at all costs. Satguru Ji, like the previous Gurus had emphasised, have only vegetarian diet, consumption of alcohol, opium, and other intoxicants was also strictly prohibited. Cleanliness and purity had to be kept while cooking as well, directives for cooking were issued besides keeping own Garva. The white traditional attire of churidar kurta-pyjama accompanied by 5 K's and a white rosary (Mala) to meditate was made the attire of a Namdhari Sikh.

Followers were instructed to get congregate in the mornings to recite Asa di Var, and in the evenings to perform Kathsat a-kirtan. Preachers were instructed to narrate the history as well as explain the meanings of Gurbani. Sat guru Ji designated 22 Subas, who could lead by example, to propagate further, the cause of Sikhism. He toured many a villages and towns to preach and guide the people. He would preach to respect and read the Sri Adi

Granth Sahib and meditate on Naam. Sat Guru Ji would ask people to get the Sri Adi Granth Sahib from forgotten corners of their household. To lead by example Sat Guru Ji lead by example in respecting the Sri Adi Granth Sahab by cleaning the dust off the

scriptures with his own turban. To make the Guru Granth more readily available, He got Sri Adi Granth Sahib printed from the press of Diwan Buta Singh this was the first instance of printing of scripture.

Giani Gian Singh summarises his view of Namdhari (Kuka) Sikhs in following verse.

They worship God,
Recite Bani chant Waheguru over and over again,
They are distinguished by their white dress, white woollen rosary,
Straight turban and flowing beard.
They perform Havan,
Recite hymns from Guru-Granth.
They are the true followers of Guru Gobind Singh Ji,
And cannot be diverted from their resolve to establish a
government of their own.
Such are impenetrable Kukas known for their worshipful ways.
Gian Singh has narrated as he has witnessed them.

Sri Guru Panth Prakash

Satguru Ji was an ardent proponent of equality of genders. The society at that time was highly skewed against women. He preached against the social evils of child-marriage, bride buying, female infanticide, and dowry to name a few, Sat Guru Ji also promoted widow remarriage. Sat Guru Ji was the first to baptise women by administering Amrit to them on 1-June-1863 at village Siar. A few days later, Sat guru Ji started the new maryada on performing the marriage ceremony. The new maryada consisted of circumambulation around fire altar (havan) while lavan, hymns as written

by Guru Ramdas Ji, are recited. The new maryada shed the truckload of unnecessary and complex rituals and broke the hegemony of Brahmin priests to perform marriages. As a result of all these reforms, the gender ratio in Namdhari Sikh's is 992, which is in stark contrast to that of 774 in Punjab state among 0-6yrs age group.

The efforts of Satguru Ram Singh Ji brought the Sikh panth from the profound depths towards the golden ascent. Giani Gian Singh narrates

Charged with this spectacular mission,
Satguru Ram Singh Ji set about delivering discourses.
He made people give up smoking and keep unshorn hair.
Particularly fortunate were those who partook of the Nectar (Amrit)
and entered the Sikh fold.
His fame spread at a pace.
People in multitude became his disciples.
Manifold grew the Khalsa.
His disciples, soaked in the bliss of Naam,
gave up opium, hashish, poppy,
liquor and various other intoxicants.
They would not eat meat.
They would not steal.
They foreswore adultery and deception.
They practised saintliness.
The Golden Age had returned.

Sri Guru Panth Prakash

Acknowledgments

This brochure is truly the synergistic product of a team of people. Without their tireless, wholehearted and unique contributions, it never would have come about. Namdhari Sikh Sangat UK expresses its deep appreciation to them.

Our truly remarkable publicity team Sant Kirpal Singh Chana , Sant Jeetej Singh Jandu, Sant Surinderpal Singh Narotra who have spent countless hours of their social and family time to put together this booklet.

A very special thanks to all the respected writers who have gone out of their way to provide these articles. They are:-

- Sant Harjinder Singh Kanwal ji
- Sant Swaran Singh Sanehi ji
- Bibi Charanjit Kaur ji
- Sant Tara Singh Anjan ji
- Sant Ajit Singh ji (Anjan Saggu)

We would like to thank the Management committees and their Presidents and representatives of all Namdhari Sikh Gurdwaras across the United Kingdom, who have given us their unconditional support.

They are:-

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ● Sant Gurtej Singh Chana ji | (President Namdhari Sikh Sangat Southall) |
| ● Sant Sukhdev Singh ji | (President Namdhari Sikh Sangat Birmingham) |
| ● Sant Sarwan Singh ji | (President Namdhari Sikh Sangat Leicester) |
| ● Sant Balvinder Singh Chana ji | (Representative Maidenhead) |
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| ● Sant Manjit Singh Bahra ji | (Vice President UK) |
| ● Sant Harvinder Singh Sian ji | (President of Vidyak Jatha UK) |

And huge thanks also to Sant Gursharan Singh Surdhar ji, Vice President Namdhari Sikh Sangat UK and project leader for this 150th anniversary celebration who has made tremendous efforts to make it happen.

Special thanks also to our outstanding Secretary's Bibi Daljit Kaur Ryatt ji, Sant Daljit Singh Bhamra ji and Sant Hardial Singh Chana ji. Grateful appreciation to our Treasurers team for their invaluable assistance, Sant Narinderpal Singh Ryatt ji, Sant Satnam Singh Reehal ji and Sant Jaspal Singh Ghatoray ji.

And finally, thanks wholeheartedly to our dear brother Sant Gurdeep Singh Viridi ji who guided us to achieve the best results with his special project planning skills.

We apologise in advance for any shortcomings or mistakes we may have made in this publication.

Sulakhan Singh Jandu

(President Namdhari Sikh Sangat UK)

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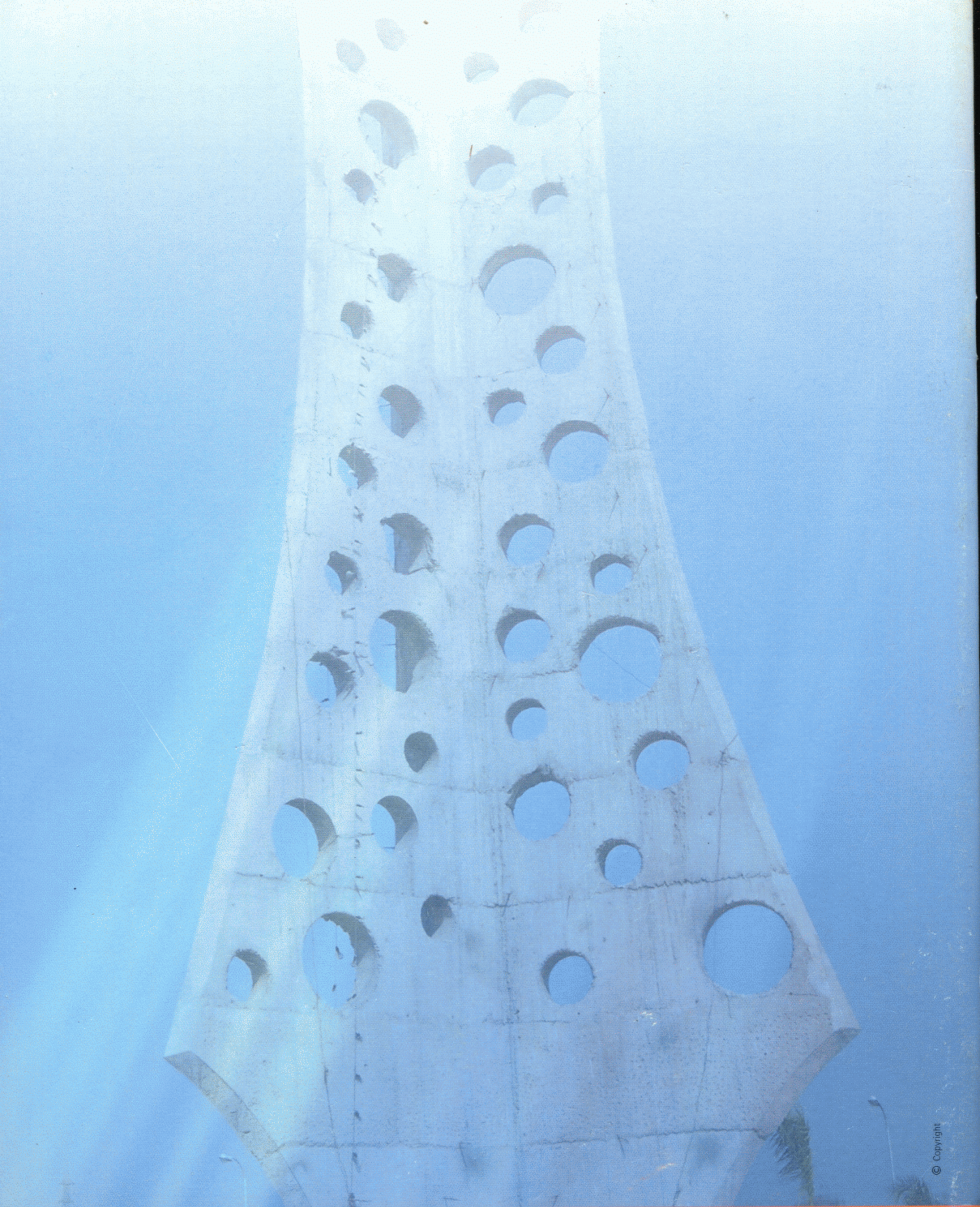
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150 Years of Sant Khalsa

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